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URBAN SPACE &  
ARISTOCRATIC  
POWER IN LATE  
ANTIQUE ROME

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AD 270–535

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CARLOS MACHADO

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LANZAROTE  
*Caliente*.COM

# Urban Space and Aristocratic Power in Late Antique Rome



**Frontispiece.** Ivory diptych of Rufius Probianus (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. theol. lat. fol. 323).

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# Urban Space and Aristocratic Power in Late Antique Rome

*AD 270–535*

CARLOS MACHADO

OXFORD  
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# Contents

|                                                                    |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <i>List of Figures and Maps</i>                                    | ix      |
| <i>List of Abbreviations and Editions Used</i>                     | xiii    |
| <br>Introduction                                                   | <br>1   |
| <br>PART 1. THE DEFINITION OF URBAN SPACE                          |         |
| 1. Aristocrats, Imperial Institutions, and the Topography of Power | 27      |
| 2. Building Late Antique Rome                                      | 62      |
| <br>PART 2. THE USES OF SPACE                                      |         |
| 3. Emperors and Senators in the Roman Forum                        | 95      |
| 4. Festivals, Ceremonies, and the Commemoration of Power           | 124     |
| 5. The Redefinition of Religious Life                              | 162     |
| <br>PART 3. DOMESTIC SPACES AND THE<br>PRIVATIZATION OF POWER      |         |
| 6. Senatorial Houses as Centres of Power                           | 201     |
| 7. Aristocratic Power and Politics in the Domestic Sphere          | 231     |
| Conclusion                                                         | 263     |
| <br><i>Bibliography</i>                                            | <br>271 |
| <i>Index Locorum</i>                                               | 303     |
| <i>Index</i>                                                       | 313     |



# List of Figures and Maps

## Figures

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Frontispiece. Ivory diptych of Rufius Probianus (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. theol. lat. fol. 323).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | ii  |
| With kind permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |
| 1.1. The Basilica of Maxentius and the Temple of Peace<br>(with area of Maxentian works indicated).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 36  |
| Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from K. S. Freyberger, <i>Das Forum Romanum</i> , Mainz 2012, Abb. 80, with the author's kind permission.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |
| 1.2. The Forum of Sibidius in the Northern Campus Martius.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 50  |
| Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from M. T. Boatwright, <i>Hadrian and the City of Rome</i> , Princeton 1987, fig. 1, republished with permission of Princeton University Press; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.                                                                                                                        |     |
| 2.1. The <i>adlocutio</i> relief, Rome, Arch of Constantine.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 64  |
| Photo: Fabio Barry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |
| 3.1. The Roman Forum in late antiquity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 98  |
| Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from K. S. Freyberger, <i>Das Forum Romanum</i> , Mainz 2012, Abb. 64, with the author's kind permission.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |
| 3.2. The Forum of Caesar in late antiquity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 99  |
| Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from A. Corsaro, A. Delfino, I. de Luca, and R. Meneghini, 'Nuovi dati archeologici per la storia del Foro di Cesare tra la fine del IV e la metà del V secolo', in <i>The Sack of Rome in 410 AD</i> , ed. J. Lipps, C. Machado, and P. von Rummel (Palilia 28), Wiesbaden 2013, p. 126 fig. 4, with the authors' kind permission. |     |
| 4.1. Statue monument of C. Caelius Saturninus (Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. n. 10,493; 10,494).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 140 |
| Photo © Vatican Museums, all rights reserved. Further reproduction, duplication, copying, or alteration of any kind is strictly prohibited.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |
| 4.2. The 'old magistrate' (Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini, MC896).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 142 |
| Photo © Roma—Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Comunali.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
| 4.3. The Basilica Apostolorum.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 152 |
| Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from F. Tolotti, <i>Memorie degli Apostoli in Catacumbas: rilievo critico della Memoria e della Basilica Apostolorum al III miglio della Via Appia</i> (Collezione Amici delle Catacombe, XIX), Città del Vaticano 1953, Tav. 1, with the publisher's kind permission.                                                              |     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 4.4. The Basilica of S. Peter.<br>Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from T. Alfaro, <i>De Basilicae<br/>Vaticanae antiquissima et nova structura</i> , ed. M. Cerratti, Rome 1914, Tav. 1.                                                                                                                   | 157 |
| 5.1. The domestic shrine off Via Giovanni Lanza.<br>From C. L. Visconti, 'Del larario e del mitreo scoperti nell'Esquilino presso<br>la chiesa di S. Marino ai Monti', <i>BullCom</i> , 1885, Tav. 3.                                                                                                      | 174 |
| 6.1. The Church of S. Balbina / <i>Domus</i> of Fabius Cilo on the Aventine.<br>Photo: author.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 210 |
| 6.2. Decoration of the Basilica of Iunius Bassus / Church of S. Andrea in<br>Catabarbara, by Giovanni da Sangallo (Vatican Library, Codex Barberinianus<br>fol. 31v. Cod. Vat. Lat. 13,033/Fototeca Unione neg. num. 2983, date 1955<br>(FU.ROMA.BASIU.11)).<br>Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome. | 211 |
| 6.3. Plan of the apsidal hall of Iunius Bassus / Church of S. Andrea<br>in Catabarbara.<br>From G. Lugli and T. Ashby, 'La basilica di Giunio Basso sull'Esquilino',<br><i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i> 9 (1932), p. 230, with the publisher's<br>kind permission.                                 | 212 |
| 6.4. <i>Opus sectile</i> with <i>pompa circensis</i> , decoration of the apsidal hall<br>of Iunius Bassus.<br>Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme/© 2019<br>Photo SCALA, Florence.                                                                                                    | 213 |
| 7.1. The Basilica of Ss. Quattro Coronati and its vicinity.<br>From C. Pavolini, 'Nuovi contributi alla topografia del Celio da rinvenimenti<br>casuali di scavi', <i>Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma</i> ,<br>1994-5, p. 176, with the author's kind permission.               | 234 |
| 7.2. The <i>domus</i> of Naeratius Cerealis on the Esquiline, and structures<br>related to it.<br>Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from R. Lanciani, <i>Forma urbis<br/>Romae</i> , Rome 1989, Tav. 17, with the publisher's kind permission.                                                               | 238 |
| 7.3. The <i>domus</i> on top of the Sette Sale cistern.<br>From: K. de Fine Licht, <i>Untersuchungen an den Trajansthermen zu<br/>Rom. 2. Sette Sale</i> , Analecta Romana Instituti Danici Supplementum<br>XIX, Rome 1990, Abb. 107, with permission of the publisher, L'Erma di<br>Bretschneider.        | 240 |
| 7.4. The <i>domus</i> on the summit of the Caelian Hill.<br>From C. Pavolini, 'Le <i>domus</i> del Celio', in <i>Aurea Roma</i> , ed. S. Ensoli and<br>E. La Rocca, Rome 2000, p. 147, with the author's kind permission.                                                                                  | 242 |
| 7.5. The <i>domus</i> of the Symmachi.<br>From C. Pavolini et al., 'La topografia antica della sommità del Celio.<br>Gli scavi nell'Ospedale Militare', <i>RM</i> 100, 1993, fig. 17, with the author's<br>kind permission.                                                                                | 243 |

- 7.6. The *domus* of Gaudentius. 247  
 From C. Pavolini et al., 'La topografia antica della sommità del Celio. Gli scavi nell'Ospedale Militare', *RM* 100, 1993, fig. 13, p. 478, with the author's kind permission.
- 7.7. The *domus* of the Valerii. 249  
 From C. Pavolini, 'Nuovi contributi alla topografia del Celio da rinvenimenti casuali di scavo', *BullCom* 96, 1994–5, p. 83, with the author's kind permission.
- 7.8. The *domus* of Piazza dei Cinquecento. 260  
 From R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, 'Episodi di trasformazione del paesaggio urbano nella Roma altomedievale attraverso l'analisi di due contesti: un isolato in Piazza dei Cinquecento e l'area dei Fori Imperiali', *Archeologia Medievale* 23, 1996, p. 57, fig. 3, with the authors' kind permission.

### Maps

1. Rome in late antiquity. xx  
 Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, Rome 2008, with the authors' kind permission.
2. Christian Rome. xxii  
 Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, Rome 2008, with the authors' kind permission.



# List of Abbreviations and Editions Used

Obs: Abbreviations of journals follow the guidelines of the *American Journal of Archaeology* (<https://www.ajaonline.org/submissions/journals-series>). Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AASS                         | <i>Acta Sanctorum</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| AE                           | <i>L'Anée Épigraphique</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Amb., <i>De offic.</i>       | Ambrose, <i>De officiis</i> , ed. and transl. I. Davidson, 2 vols (Oxford 2001).                                                                                                                                                            |
| Amb., <i>Ep.</i>             | Ambrose, <i>Epistulae</i> , in O. Faller and M. Zelzer (eds), <i>Ambrosius, Epistulae et Acta</i> , 3 vols (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 82.1–3) (Vienna 1968–82).                                                          |
| Amb., <i>Ep. extra coll.</i> | Ambrose, <i>Epistulae extra collectionem</i> in M. Zelzer (ed.), <i>Ambrosius, Epistularum liber decimus, Epistulae extra collectionem, Gesta concilii Aquileienseis</i> (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 82.3) (Vienna 1982). |
| Ambrosiaster, <i>Quaest.</i> | Ambrosiaster, <i>Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti</i> , in A. Souter (ed.), <i>Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII</i> (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 50) (Vienna 1908).                    |
| Amm. Marc.                   | <i>Ammianus Marcellinus</i> , 3 vols, transl. J. C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1982).                                                                                                                                    |
| Anon. Val.                   | Anonymus Valesianus, in J. C. Rolfe (transl.), <i>Ammianus Marcellinus</i> , vol. 3 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1982) 508–69.                                                                                                   |
| Aug., <i>Civ. Dei</i>        | Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> , ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 47–8) (Turnhout 1955).                                                                                                                  |
| Aug., <i>Conf.</i>           | <i>Augustine: Confessions</i> , 3 vols, ed. and comm. J. O'Donnell (Oxford 1992).                                                                                                                                                           |
| Aug., <i>De mor. Manich.</i> | Augustine, <i>De moribus Manichaeorum</i> , in J. B. Bauer (ed.), <i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum libri duo</i> (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 90) (Vienna 1992).                              |
| Aur. Vict., <i>Caes.</i>     | Aurelius Victor, <i>De Caesaribus</i> , ed. F. Pilchmayr (Leipzig 1911).                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Avit., <i>Ep.</i>            | Avitus of Vienne, <i>Epistulae</i> , in R. Peiper (ed.), <i>Alcimi Ecdicii Aviti</i> (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi 6.2) (Berlin 1883).                                                                              |
| <i>Bibliotheca Sanctorum</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Sanctorum</i> (Rome 1961–87).                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Boeth., <i>Consol.</i>       | Boethius, <i>Consolations of Philosophy</i> , transl. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1966).                                                                                                           |

- Carmen contra paganos* <Contro i pagani> *Carmen cod. Paris. lat. 8084*, ed. and transl. A. Bartalucci (Pisa 1998).
- Carmen contra senatorem* (Ps.-Cyprian), *Carmen contra senatorem*, in *Cypriani Galli poetae Heptateuchos*, ed. R. Peiper (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 23) (Vienna 1881) 227–30.
- Cass., *Var.* *Cassiodori Senatoris Variarum*, ed. T. Mommsen (Monumentae Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi 12) (Berlin 1894).
- CCCA *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque*, 7 vols, ed. M. J. Vermaseren (Leiden 1977–89).
- Chron. Pasch.* *Chronicon Paschale*, transl. M. Whitby and M. Whitby ('Translated Texts for Historians 7) (Liverpool 1989).
- Chronographus a. 354* T. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora*, vol. 1 (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi 9) (Berlin 1892).
- Cicero, *Att.* Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 4 vols, ed. and transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1999).
- Cicero, *Cael.* Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, transl. R. Gardner (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1968).
- Cicero, *Off.* Cicero, *De officiis*, transl. W. Miller (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1968).
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.
- Claudian, *Pan. Prob. et Olyb.* *Panegyricus Probino et Olybrio consulibus*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 2–23.
- Claudian, *De bello Gild.* *De bello Gildonico*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 98–137.
- Claudian, *De IV cos. Hon.* *De quarto consulatu Honorii*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 286–335.
- Claudian, *Pan. Fl. Theod.* *Panegyricus dictus Manlio Theodoro consuli*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 336–63.
- Claudian, *De cos. Stil.* *De consulatu Stilichonis*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vols 1–2 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 364–93 and 1–69.
- Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* *De sexto consulatu Honorii*, in M. Platnauer (transl.), *Claudian*, vol. 2 (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1922) 70–123.
- Cod. Iust.* *Codex Iustinianus*, in P. Krüger (ed.), *Corpus iuris civilis*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1887); translated in B. W. Frier (ed.), *The Codex of Justinian: a new annotated translation*, 3 vols (Cambridge 2016).
- Cod. Theod.* *Codex Theodosianus*, in T. Mommsen and P. Meyer et al. (eds), *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis* (Berlin 1905); translated in C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (New York 1952).



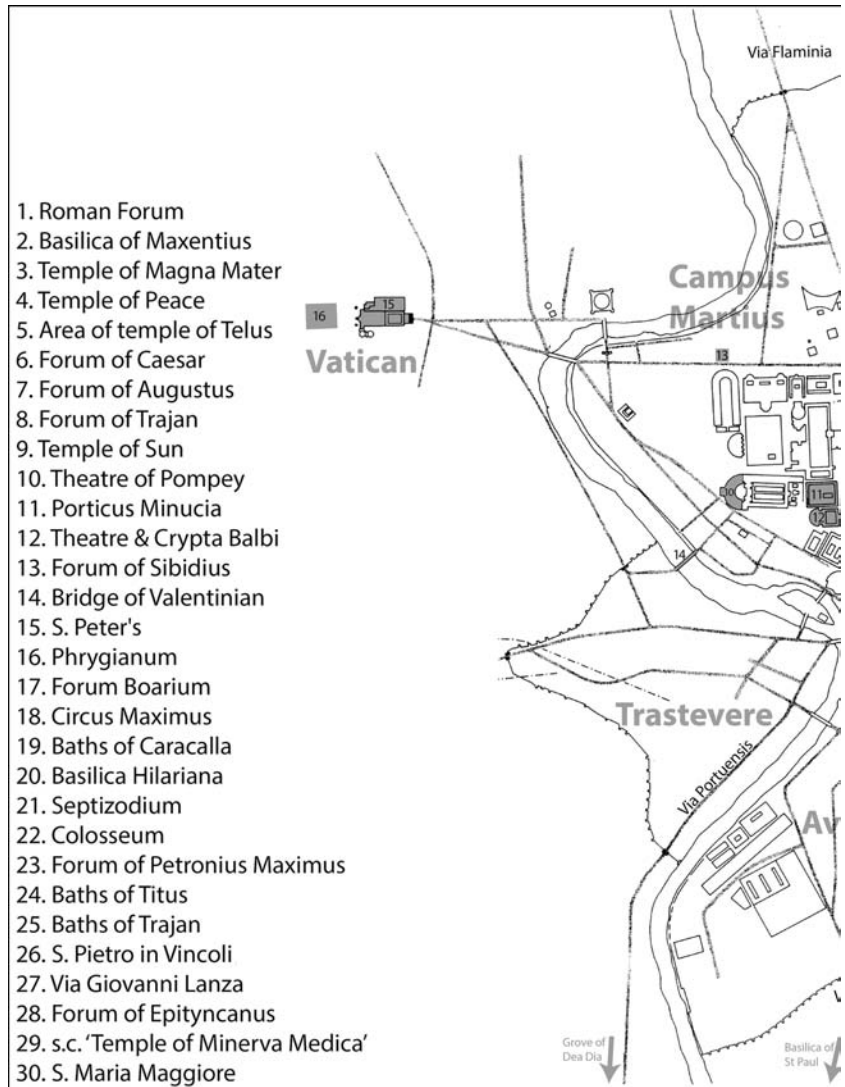
|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Cod. Vat. Lat.</i>        | <i>Codici Vaticani Latini</i> , in M. Buonocore (ed.), <i>Appunti di topografia romana nei codici Lanciani della Biblioteca apostolica vaticana</i> , 5 vols (Rome 1997–2002).                                                       |
| <i>Coll. Avell.</i>          | <i>Collectio Avellana</i> , in O. Günther (ed.), <i>Epistulae Imperatorum Pontificum (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 35)</i> (Vienna 1895).                                                                            |
| <i>De reb. bell.</i>         | <i>De rebus bellicis</i> , ed. and transl. R. Ireland (British Archaeological Reports. International Series 63) (Oxford 1979).                                                                                                       |
| De Rossi, <i>ICUR</i>        | <i>Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores</i> , 3 vols, ed. G. B. De Rossi (Rome 1857–1915).                                                                                                              |
| <i>Dig.</i>                  | <i>The Digest of Justinian</i> , 4 vols, ed. T. Mommsen and P. Krueger, transl. A. Watson (Philadelphia 1985).                                                                                                                       |
| Dio                          | <i>Dio's Roman History</i> , 9 vols, transl. E. Cary (Loeb Classical Library) (London 1914–27).                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>EDR</i>                   | <i>Epigraphic Database Roma</i> ( <a href="http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php">http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php</a> ).                                                                                                   |
| <i>Epigrammata Damasiana</i> | <i>Epigrammata Damasiana</i> , ed. A. Ferrua (Rome 1942).                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Eus., <i>VC</i>              | Eusebius, <i>Vita Constantini</i> in F. Winkelmann (ed.), <i>Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantins</i> (Berlin 1975); translated in A. Cameron and S. G. Hall, <i>Eusebius. Life of Constantine</i> (Oxford 1999).                  |
| Frontinus, <i>Aq.</i>        | Frontinus, <i>De aquaeductu urbis Romae</i> , ed. R. H. Rodgers (Cambridge 2004).                                                                                                                                                    |
| Fronto, <i>Ep. Var.</i>      | M. Cornelius Fronto <i>Epistulae</i> , ed. S. Naber (Leipzig 1867).                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Gelas., <i>Adv. Androm.</i>  | Gelasius, <i>Adversus Andromachum</i> , in G. Pomarès (ed. and transl.), <i>Lettre contre les Lupercales, et dix-huit messes du Sacramentaire Léonien</i> (Sources chrétiennes 65) (Paris 1959).                                     |
| <i>Gesta Senatus</i>         | T. Mommsen and P. Meyer et al. (eds), <i>Theodosiani Libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis</i> (Berlin 1905); translated in C. Pharr, <i>The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions</i> (New York 1952). |
| Greg. I, <i>Ep.</i>          | S. Gregorii Magni, <i>Registrum Epistolarum</i> , 2 vols, ed. D. Norberg (Corpus Scriptorum Series Latina 140) (Turnhout 1982).                                                                                                      |
| Greg. I, <i>In Ezech.</i>    | Gregory I, <i>Homily on Ezekiel</i> , in C. Morel (ed. and transl.), <i>Grégoire le Grand: Homélies sur Ézéchiél</i> , 2 vols (Sources chrétiennes 327 and 360) (Paris 1986–90).                                                     |
| <i>ICUR n.s.</i>             | A. Silvagni et al. (eds), <i>Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae</i> , nova series (Rome 1922–).                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>IG</i>                    | <i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>IGUR</i>                  | L. Moretti (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Graecae urbis Romae</i> (Rome 1968–90).                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>ILCV</i>                  | E. Diehl (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres</i> (Berlin 1925–31).                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ILS                                                | H. Dessau (ed.), <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> (Berlin 1892–1916).                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Innocentius, <i>Ep. Dec. Gub.</i> ( <i>Ep.</i> 25) | Innocentius, <i>Epistula</i> 25, in R. Cabié (ed. and transl.), <i>La lettre du pape Innocent Ier à Decentius de Gubbio, 19 Mars 416</i> (Leuven 1973).                                                                                                |
| InscrIt                                            | A. Degrassi, <i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i> , 13.2 (Rome 1963).                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Jerome, <i>C. Vig.</i>                             | <i>Liber contra Vigilantium</i> , ed. J. P. Migne, <i>PL</i> 23.339–52.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Jerome, <i>Ep.</i>                                 | <i>Saint Jérôme, Lettres</i> , 8 vols, ed. and transl. J. Labourt (Les Belles Lettres) (Paris 1949–63).                                                                                                                                                |
| Jerome, <i>In Ezech.</i>                           | <i>Commentarium in Ezechielem</i> , ed. J. P. Migne, <i>PL</i> 25.15–490.                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Jerome, <i>In Jerem.</i>                           | <i>Commentaria in Jeremiam Prophetam</i> , ed. J. P. Migne, <i>PL</i> 24.705–936.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Krautheimer, <i>CBCR</i>                           | R. Krautheimer (ed.), <i>Corpus basilicarum Christianarum Romae</i> , 5 vols (Vatican City 1937–77).                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lact. <i>Mort. Pers.</i>                           | Lactantius, <i>De mortibus persecutorum</i> , ed. and transl. J. L. Creed (Oxford 1984).                                                                                                                                                               |
| Lanciani, <i>FUR</i>                               | R. Lanciani, <i>Forma urbis Romae</i> (Rome 1989, orig. edn 1893–1901).                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Leo, <i>Serm.</i>                                  | Leo I, <i>Sermons</i> , in J. Leclercq and R. Dolle (ed. and transl.), <i>Léon le Grand. Sermons</i> , 3 vols (Sources Chrétiennes 22 bis, 49 bis, 74 bis and 200) (Paris 1947–73).                                                                    |
| <i>Lib. pont.</i>                                  | <i>Le liber pontificalis</i> , 3 vols, ed. L. Duchesne (Paris 1886); translated in R. Davis, <i>The Book of Pontiffs: the ancient biographies of the first ninety Roman bishops to AD 715</i> (Translated Texts for Historians 5) (Liverpool 1989).    |
| <i>Lib. precum</i>                                 | <i>Libellus precum</i> , in A. Canellis (ed.), <i>Supplique aux empereurs: Libellus precum et Lex Augusta. Précédé de Faustin, Confession de foi</i> (Sources chrétiennes 504) (Paris 2006).                                                           |
| Livy                                               | <i>Livy</i> , 13 vols, transl. B. Foster (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1919).                                                                                                                                                                |
| LSA                                                | <i>The Last Statues of Antiquity</i> ( <a href="http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk">http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk</a> )                                                                                                                       |
| LTUR                                               | <i>Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae</i> , 6 vols, ed. E. M. Steinby (Rome 1993–2000).                                                                                                                                                                 |
| LTUR-S                                             | <i>Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae: Suburbium</i> , 5 vols, ed. A. La Regina (Rome 2001–8).                                                                                                                                                          |
| Lucan, <i>BC</i>                                   | <i>The Civil War</i> , transl. J. D. Duff (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1962).                                                                                                                                                               |
| Lydus, <i>De mag.</i>                              | Ioannes Lydus, <i>De magistratibus</i> , in A. C. Bandy (ed. and transl.), <i>Ioannes Lydus, On Powers or: the magistracies of the Roman state</i> (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, 149) (Philadelphia 1983).                           |
| Macro., <i>Sat.</i>                                | Macrobius, <i>Saturnalia</i> , 3 vols, ed. and transl. R. Kaster (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 2011).                                                                                                                                        |
| Maj., <i>Nov.</i>                                  | Majorian, <i>Novellae</i> , in P. Meyer (ed.), <i>Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis</i> , vol. 2 (Berlin 1905); translated in C. Pharr, <i>The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions</i> (New York 1952). |

- Malalas *The Chronicle of John Malalas. A Translation*, transl. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott (Byzantina Australiensia 4) (Melbourne 1986).
- Malchus R. C. Blockley (ed. and transl.), *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. 2: *Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes* (ARCA 10) (Liverpool 1983) 401–63.
- Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum collatio* J. Baviera (ed.), *Fontes iuris Romani Anteustiniani*, vol. 2 (Florence 1940) 541–89.
- Not. Const.* *Notitiae urbis Constantinopolitanae*, in O. Seeck (ed.), *Notitia dignitatum* (Frankfurt 1962) 228–43.
- Not. dig. occ.* *Notitia dignitatum in partibus occidentis*, in O. Seeck (ed.), *Notitia dignitatum* (Frankfurt 1962) 103–225.
- Olymp. Olympiodorus, R. C. Blockley (ed. and transl.), *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. 2: *Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes* (ARCA 10) (Liverpool 1983) 151–220.
- Orientius, *Commonitorium* ed. J. P. Migne, *PL* 61.977–1006.
- Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* M. Barchiesi, G. Bartelink, and C. Mohrmann (edd. and transl.), *La Storia Lausiaca* (Verona 1974).
- Pan. Lat.* *Panegyrici Latini*, in C. Nixon and B. Rodgers (edd. and transl.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley 1994).
- Paul. Mil., *V. Amb.* Paulinus of Milan, *Vita S. Ambrosii*, ed. J. P. Migne, *PL* 14.27–46.
- Paul. Nola, *Ep.* *Paulinus Nolanus Epistulae*, ed. G. Hartel (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 29) (Vienna 1894).
- Pliny, *Ep.* Pliny the Younger, *Letters and Panegyricus*, 2 vols, transl. B. Radice (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1969).
- Pliny, *HN* Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 10 vols, transl. H. B. Dewing (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1969).
- PLRE* *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols, ed. by A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris (Cambridge 1971–92).
- Plut. *Plutarch's Lives*, 6 vols, transl. B. Perrin (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1959).
- Priscus R. C. Blockley (ed. and transl.), *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. 2: *Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes* (ARCA 10) (Liverpool 1983) 221–400.
- Proc., Wars* Procopius, *The Wars*, 5 vols, transl. H. B. Dewing (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1954).
- Prud., C. Symm.* Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, in H. J. Thomson (transl.), *Prudentius*, vols 1–2 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1962) 344–401 and 2–97.

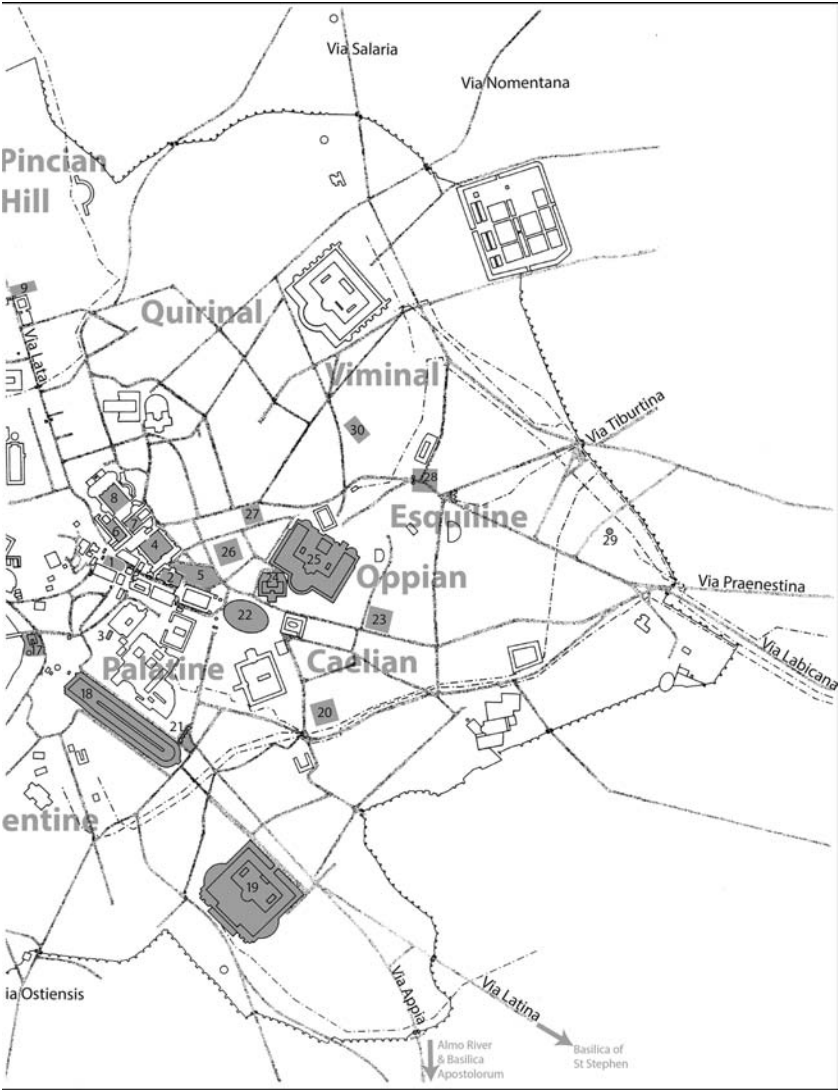
|                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prud., <i>Perist.</i>         | Prudentius, <i>Peristephanon</i> , in H. J. Thomson (transl.), <i>Prudentius</i> , vol. 2 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1962) 98–345.                           |
| Ps.-Aeth., <i>Cosmog.</i>     | Pseudo-Aethicus, <i>Cosmographia</i> , in A. Riese (ed.), <i>Geographi Latini minores</i> (Heilbronn 1878) 71–101.                                                        |
| RE                            | <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1894–1980).                                                                                     |
| <i>Res gestae</i>             | <i>Res gestae Divi Augusti: text, translation, and commentary</i> , ed. and transl. A. Cooley (Cambridge 2009).                                                           |
| Rut. Nam., <i>De red. suo</i> | Rutilius Namatianus, <i>De reditu suo</i> , in J. W. Duff and A. Duff (transl.), <i>Minor Latin Poets</i> , vol. 2 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1982) 764–829. |
| Sallust, <i>Cat.</i>          | <i>Bellum Catilinae</i> , in J. C. Rolfe (transl.), <i>Sallust</i> (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1960) 20–147.                                                  |
| Seneca, <i>Controv.</i>       | <i>The Elder Seneca, Controversiae</i> , 2 vols, transl. M. Winterbottom (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1974).                                                   |
| Seneca, <i>Ben.</i>           | <i>De beneficiis</i> , in J. Basore (transl.), <i>Seneca, Moral Essays</i> , vol. 3 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1964).                                        |
| Seneca, <i>Dial.</i>          | <i>Dialogues</i> , in J. Basore (transl.), <i>Seneca, Moral Essays</i> , vols 1–2 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1964).                                          |
| SHA                           | <i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i> , in A. Chastagnol (transl.), <i>Histoire Auguste. Les empereurs romains des IIème et IIIème siècles</i> (Paris 1994).               |
| Alex. Sev.                    | Alexander Severus                                                                                                                                                         |
| Ant. Pius                     | Antoninus Pius                                                                                                                                                            |
| Aur.                          | Aurelian                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Claud.                        | Claudius                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Comm.                         | Commodus                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Gall.                         | The two Gallieni                                                                                                                                                          |
| Gord.                         | The three Gordians                                                                                                                                                        |
| Hadr.                         | Hadrian                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Heliogab.                     | Heliogabalus                                                                                                                                                              |
| Max.                          | The two Maximini                                                                                                                                                          |
| Max. et Balb.                 | Maximus and Balbinus                                                                                                                                                      |
| Pesc. Nig.                    | Pescennius Niger                                                                                                                                                          |
| Prob.                         | Probus                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Sev.                          | Septimius Severus                                                                                                                                                         |
| Tir. Tryg.                    | The Thirty Pretenders                                                                                                                                                     |
| Val.                          | The two Valerians                                                                                                                                                         |
| Sid. Apoll., <i>Carm.</i>     | Sidonius Apollinaris, <i>Carmina</i> , in W. Anderson (transl.), <i>Sidonius: poems and letters</i> , vol. 1 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1956) 1–327.         |
| Sid. Apoll., <i>Ep.</i>       | Sidonius Apollinaris, <i>Epistulae</i> , in W. Anderson (transl.), <i>Sidonius: poems and letters</i> , 2 vols (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1956).             |

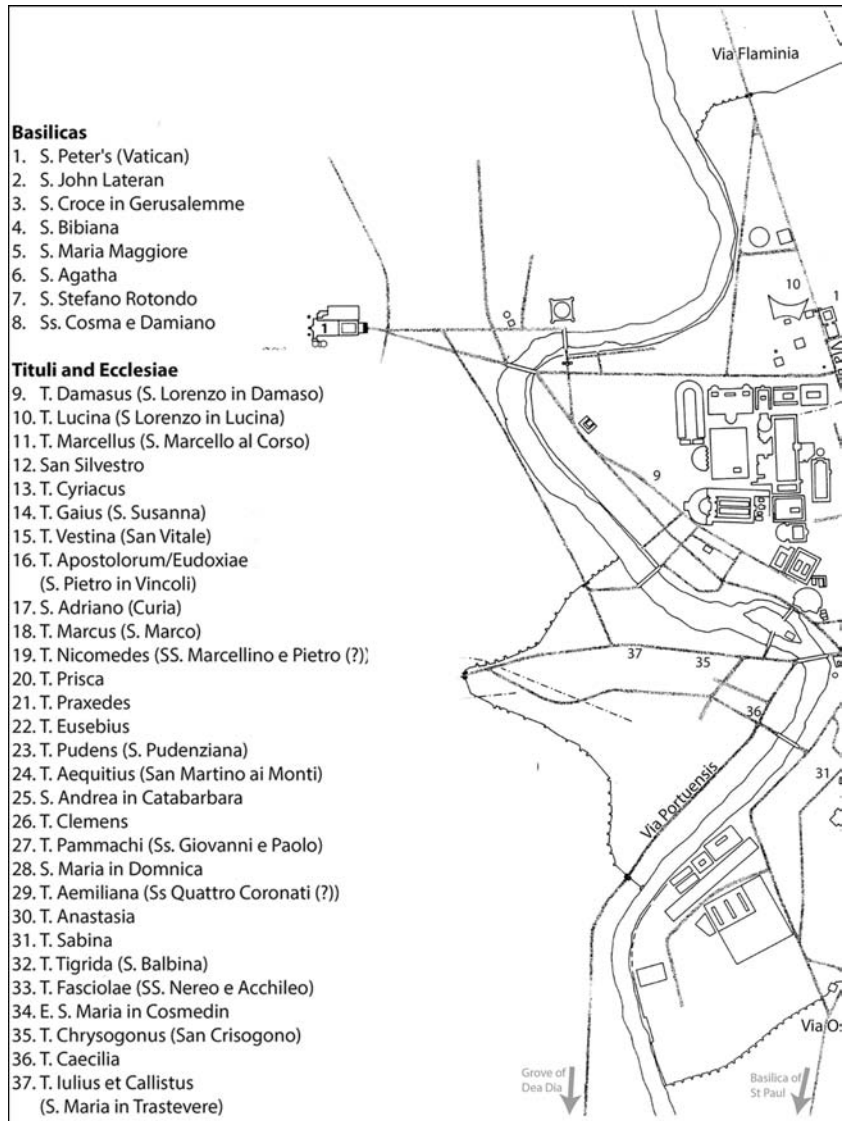
- Siricius, *Ep.* Siricius, *Epistulae*, ed. J. P. Migne, *PL* 13.1131–94.
- Socrat., *HE* Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in P. Maraval and P. Périchon (transl.) *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 4 vols (Sources Chrétiennes 477, 493, 505, 506) (Paris 2004–7).
- Soz. *HE* Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in J. Bidez (ed.) (with B. Grillet and G. Sabbah transl.), *Sozomène. Histoire ecclésiastique*, 4 vols (Sources chrétiennes 306, 418, 495, 516) (Paris 1983–2008).
- Stat. *Silv.* Statius, *Silvae*, in D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Statius. Silvae* (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 2015).
- Suet. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 2 vols, transl. J. C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1914).
- Symm., *Ep.* Symmachus, *Epistulae*, in J.-P. Callu (ed. and transl.), *Symmaque. Correspondence*, 4 vols (Les Belles Lettres) (Paris 1972–2002).
- Symm., *Or.* Symmachus, *Orationes*, in J.-P. Callu (ed. and transl.), *Symmaque. Discours; rapports* (Les Belles Lettres) (Paris 2009).
- Symm., *Relat.* Symmachus, *Relationes*, in J.-P. Callu (ed. and transl.), *Symmaque. Discours; rapports* (Les Belles Lettres) (Paris 2009); transl. by R. H. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor: the 'Relationes' of Symmachus* (Oxford 1973).
- Tacitus, *Ann.* Tacitus, *The Annals*, 2 vols, transl. J. Jackson (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1962).
- Themistius, *Or.* *Themistii orationes quae supersunt*, 3 vols, ed. H. Schenkl and G. Downey (Leipzig 1965–74).
- V. *Mel. Gr.* *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, ed. and transl. D. Gorce (Sources Chrétiennes 90) (Paris 1962).
- V. *Mel. Lat.* *Gérontius. La Vie latine de sainte Mélanie*, ed. and transl. P. Laurence (Jerusalem 2002).
- V. S. *Fulgentii* S. *Fulgentii episcopi Ruspensis vita*, ed. J. P. Migne, *PL* 65.117–50.
- Val. III, *Nov.* Valentinian III, *Novellae*, in P. Meyer (ed.), *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1905); translated in C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (New York 1952).
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- Varro, *De re rust.* Varro, *De re rustica* in W. D. Hooper and H. B. Ash (transl.) *Cato, Varro: On Agriculture* (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1934) 160–529.
- Vergil, *Aen.* Virgil, *Aeneid* in R. Mynors (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis opera* (Oxford 1969) 103–422.
- Vitruvius, *De arch.* Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 2 vols, transl. F. Granger (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA 1965).
- Zos. Zosimus, in F. Paschoud (ed. and transl.), *Zosime. Histoire Nouvelle*, 5 vols (Paris 1971–89).



**Map 1.** Rome in late antiquity.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, Rome 2008, with the authors' kind permission.

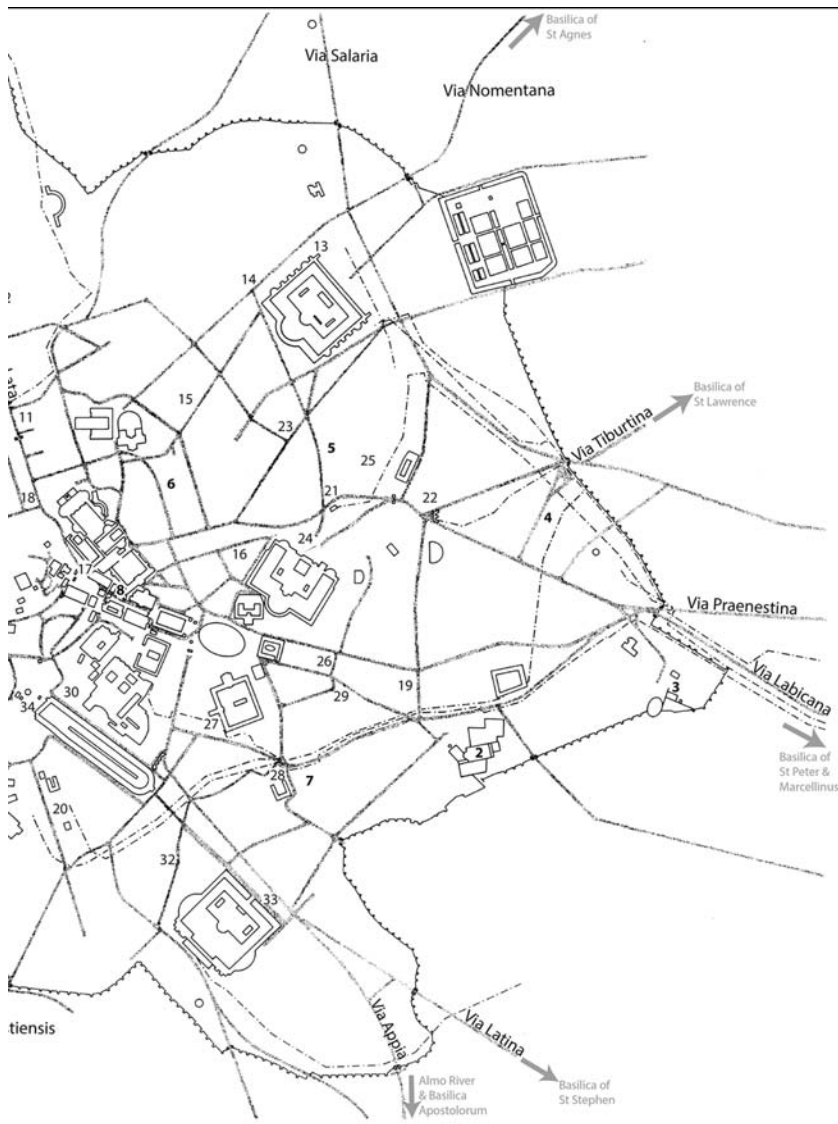




**Map 2. Christian Rome.**

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, *Roma nell'altomedioevo*, Rome 2008, with the authors' kind permission.







# Introduction

It was at Rome, on the fifteenth of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the City first started to my mind.<sup>1</sup>

The fate of Rome at the end of antiquity is a long-standing obsession of western intellectual tradition. For centuries, artists, writers, and scholars have treated the transformation of the imperial capital into a much poorer and smaller medieval city as a metaphor for the fall of empire and the end of classical civilization. This attitude can be traced back to late antiquity itself, when the Christian preacher Jerome lamented the sack of the city in 410 remarking that ‘in one city, the whole world perished’.<sup>2</sup> At the height of Enlightenment, Edward Gibbon claimed to have been inspired to write *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by the contrast between the ruined state of its once magnificent monuments and the dominating presence of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The potency of the *Urbs* as a symbol of wider historical changes was enhanced by the visibility of its ruins. Closer to us, Rodolfo Lanciani—the archaeologist responsible for overseeing the most extensive campaigns of excavation ever to have taken place in Rome—claimed that it was while sitting at the edge of the Palatine Hill, observing the remains of its once splendid palace, that he decided to write his own study of the destruction of the city (probably echoing Gibbon).<sup>4</sup> To all purposes, the end of the Roman empire remained inextricably linked to the decline of the city and its urban fabric.

This book is a study of the history of Rome between the reign of Aurelian (270–5) and the Byzantine invasion of Italy (535). During these eventful 265 years, the old imperial capital was thoroughly transformed in all its aspects, from its topography to its monumental outlook, from its social organization to its cultural and religious identity. As its title suggests, *Urban Space and Aristocratic Power in Late Antique Rome* examines these processes from a specific perspective, focusing on the changing relationship between the Roman elite and the city’s urban space. My aim is to understand how members of the senatorial elite incorporated

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon (1896) 302.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *In Ezech. I, praef.* (PL 25.16): ‘in una urbe totus orbis interiit’. Roman concern with decline has a much longer history, as shown by Mazzarino (1959).

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon’s account of his own visit was itself a highly polished one: see Edwards (1996) 72–3.

<sup>4</sup> Lanciani (1899) 3.

Rome—its spaces, institutions, and traditions—into their social and political strategies, as a way of enhancing and preserving their standing in late antique society. In the process, they redefined the spaces of the city, appropriating it to an extent unknown since the end of the Republican period. As I will show, the social and political strategies of the Roman elite remained remarkably consistent over the three centuries covered in this study, in spite of violent political changes and radical religious developments.

The study of late antiquity has experienced a remarkable expansion in recent decades, a boom that had a direct impact on our understanding of the city of Rome and its elite during this period.<sup>5</sup> Scholarship has moved a long way from the historical judgements and perspectives of Gibbon, even if much of it remains concerned with the two developments that first caught his attention: the demise of imperial power and the rise of the Church.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most influential figure in this process was Richard Krautheimer, whose study of the city's Christian basilicas served as a base for his analysis of the evolution of the imperial capital into a Christian centre.<sup>7</sup> More recently, scholars have examined the extent to which Rome remained associated with imperial power, being the stage for building projects and political celebrations.<sup>8</sup> The progress of Christianization has also been the subject of important studies that charted the topographic, institutional, and cultural changes set in motion by the spread of the new religion, following the pioneering work of Charles Pietri.<sup>9</sup>

As much as the impact of empire-wide processes, the role played by the local elite in these changes has also attracted considerable attention. Although interested in the western senatorial order as a whole, John Matthews scrutinized the involvement of Roman aristocrats in the political changes of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, as they occupied key positions in government and used their economic and social capital to help define imperial policies.<sup>10</sup> André Chastagnol examined the part played by Roman aristocrats in the city's administration, and recent work has emphasized their dominance over the city's public life.<sup>11</sup> As Bryan Ward-Perkins showed, members of this group were actively involved in the

<sup>5</sup> See Giardina (1999) for the idea of an 'explosion of Late Antiquity'; for good examples of these scholarly developments in the case of Rome, see Harris (1999); Ensoli and La Rocca (2000) Cooper and Hillner (2007); Behrwald and Witschel (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Marazzi (2000) offers a good review of the scholarly developments in the area.

<sup>7</sup> Krautheimer's studies were published as the five-volume *Corpus basilicarum Christianarum Romae* (Krautheimer, CBCR); see esp. Krautheimer (1980) and (1983).

<sup>8</sup> See esp. Bauer (1996), Curran (2000), and Humphries (2007). Attention to imperial projects has also dominated the works of Coarelli (1986) and (1999A), and it is the focus of McEvoy and Moser (2017), a special issue of *Antiquité Tardive*.

<sup>9</sup> Pietri (1976). For recent approaches, see Fraschetti (1999A) and more recently the essays collected in Salzman, Sághy, and Lizzi Testa (2016). For examples of cultural approaches, see Salzman (1990); Diefenbach (2007); Behrwald and Witschel (2012); and Wilkinson (2015).

<sup>10</sup> Matthews (1990, originally published in 1975).

<sup>11</sup> Chastagnol (1960); for aristocratic involvement in Rome's public life, see the essays in Roda (1996); more recently Lizzi Testa (2004).

construction and restoration of public structures until their attention was turned to the patronage of churches.<sup>12</sup> In fact, senatorial families were key agents in the religious transformations taking place in this period, sponsoring Christian structures, promoting the cult of specific martyrs, and embracing the principle of charity.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps more crucially, our picture of the senatorial aristocracy as a whole has been profoundly renewed, as we now have a much more precise picture of the composition, ideology, and cultural values of this social group.<sup>14</sup>

A similar progress can be observed in our knowledge of late Roman archaeology and topography. Although scholars have traditionally paid attention to the fate of classical monuments at the end of antiquity, the study of this period experienced important developments from the 1980s onwards, especially after the excavation of the Crypta Balbi complex.<sup>15</sup> The more intensive use of stratigraphic analysis and greater attention paid to layers of abandonment has meant that the post-classical phases of imperial monuments can now be fully integrated into our picture of the physical history of the city. New excavations and the careful re-evaluation of archival material have revealed a great amount of new data about different parts of the city, from the Caelian to the Viminal Hill, from the imperial fora to the suburbs, providing us with a much more comprehensive view of late antique Rome.<sup>16</sup> Christian archaeologists have played a crucial role in this process, reassessing the chronology, location, and architecture of spaces for worship as well as for burial complexes.<sup>17</sup> The publication of the multi-volume *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae* for the city and the suburb (respectively, *LTUR* and *LTUR-S*), was a fundamental step in these developments, putting our understanding of the topography of the city on a much firmer footing. As a result, scholars are now better informed about the city than ever before, as new excavation works continue at breakneck speed.<sup>18</sup>

And yet, in spite of this remarkable progress, our picture of the history of Rome and of its elite remains fragmentary and partial. There is still great need for an approach that integrates the physical and social histories of the city, showing how

<sup>12</sup> Ward-Perkins (1984).

<sup>13</sup> See the studies collected in Pietri (1996) and Cooper and Hillner (2007). For the cult of martyrs, see Maskarinec (2018); for charitable giving, see more recently Brown (2012).

<sup>14</sup> Knowledge about the composition of the Roman aristocracy, although still dependent on the volumes of *PLRE*, has been expanded by Orlandi (2004); for the cultural conservatism of senators, see Niquet (2000).

<sup>15</sup> See, for a synthetic account of the excavations at the Crypta Balbi, Manacorda (2001); for nineteenth-century antecedents, see Lanciani (1899) and (1893). Late antique phases play a remarkable role in Hülsen (1906), written just before Giacomo Boni's excavations of the Forum.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Pavolini (2006); Barbera and Paris (1996); Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2007); Pergola, Santangeli Valenzani, and Volpe (2003). For a comprehensive survey, see most recently Lipps, Machado, and von Rummel (2013).

<sup>17</sup> The fundamental starting point remains Krautheimer's *CBCR*; see, more recently, Guidobaldi and Guiglia Guidobaldi (2002); for burial spaces, see Fiocchi Nicolai (2001).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Coates-Stephens's 'Notes from Rome', published in *PBSR* between 2008 and 2017, provides an exciting and comprehensive view of these developments.

urban space and society were part of the same process of change—the making of late antique Rome. Being involved in so many different aspects of city life, the Roman aristocracy offers a unique opportunity for analysing historical changes from a local point of view, taking into account both its concrete historical circumstances and the wider developments that marked the late antique period.<sup>19</sup> Other agents contributed to the transformation of Rome in this period, such as the imperial court, the clergy, and the *plebs*. However, no other group was as intimately involved in all aspects of city life. It is by focusing on the senatorial elite, its social strategies and interactions with other elements in Roman society *in their spatial contexts*, that we can appreciate the complexity and contradictions of Rome's late antique history.

### Rome in Late Antiquity

The late antique history of Rome was marked by many important continuities, and Romans were well aware of them.<sup>20</sup> Histories, oral traditions, and inscriptions served as powerful reminders of Rome's glorious past, and advertised to all the unique character of the city. Even for a royal official writing in Ravenna under Ostrogothic rulers, like Cassiodorus, the imperial character of Rome remained a reality.<sup>21</sup> Romans were well aware of the fact that their city was changing, too. In fact, such continuities—and Roman appreciation for them—must be understood in the context of dramatic and unprecedented transformations.<sup>22</sup> By the time of the Byzantine invasion of Italy, in 535, Rome was still—by the standards of its contemporaries—a splendid and wealthy city, but it was very different from what it had been in the previous centuries (see Map 1).<sup>23</sup>

### The fourth-century capital

By the end of the third century, Rome was still the largest and wealthiest city of the empire; it was, to all effects, its uncontested capital.<sup>24</sup> After the political and military turmoil of the preceding decades, Aurelian (270–5) consolidated imperial

<sup>19</sup> See, for a useful parallel (although dealing with a later period), Wickham (2015) 1–5.

<sup>20</sup> Lançon (1995) provides a useful account of these.

<sup>21</sup> See, on these issues, Behrwald (2009), as well as the essays collected in Behrwald and Witschel (2012). For Cassiodorus and Rome, see Fauvinet-Ranson (2006B).

<sup>22</sup> See, on this issue, Carandini (1993).

<sup>23</sup> Llewellyn (1971) 58–77 is a good narrative of the events that followed the arrival of Justinian's troops. Krautheimer (1980) 62–9 paints a bleak picture of the period that followed. For a more nuanced view, see Coates-Stephens (1998).

<sup>24</sup> See, for Rome in the third century, Curran (2000) 3–42. For Rome as a symbolic centre, Paschoud (1967).

power and control over Italy and the *Urbs*.<sup>25</sup> The beginning of the reign was marked by campaigns against the Alamanni and the Juthungi, who had invaded Italy, while imperial armies remained busy suppressing autonomist political movements, such as Zenobia's Palmyrene empire. In Rome, the rebellion of the mint-workers was violently suppressed, resulting in the massacre of the local elite according to later sources.<sup>26</sup> In this context, Aurelian's government set in motion a series of initiatives that would have profound repercussions in the physical, administrative, and social make-up of the city. Already in 271, the emperor initiated the building of the Aurelian Wall, the single most important project in late Roman construction history.<sup>27</sup> The public system of distribution of food-stuffs to citizens, the *annona*, was expanded to incorporate wine and pork, and the distribution of grain was replaced with the distribution of bread (as we will see in Chapter 1). The religious life of the city was also changed in the process: the emperor was more closely associated with the Sun god, building a large temple to him and making the priesthood of Sol one of the most prestigious religious offices available to Roman senators.<sup>28</sup>

The decades that followed were marked by further accelerated developments. Although Rome was rarely visited by emperors during the Tetrarchy (284–305), it continued to serve as an important symbol of power.<sup>29</sup> New ambitious projects continued apace, reaffirming imperial ideology and sponsoring the well-being of the Roman people.<sup>30</sup> The Roman Forum and parts of the Campus Martius were restored by Diocletian and Maximian after the great fire that swept these areas in 283, and the same emperors sponsored a magnificent bathing complex on the Viminal Hill, the largest ever built in the Roman world. The political importance of the city was confirmed in the rebellion that put Maxentius on the throne, in 306: Rome was celebrated as the ideological and political basis of the new regime, as the emperor associated himself with the founders of the city through the emission of coins and his own ambitious building projects.<sup>31</sup> Maxentius carried out important works along the Via Sacra, restoring and constructing monuments that he did not live to inaugurate, including a new basilica on the Velia, the rebuilding of Hadrian's Temple of Venus and Rome, and the restoration of the Temple of Peace, including a domed circular structure connecting it to the Via Sacra and the Roman Forum (see Fig. 1.1). These were dedicated by Constantine, who took the

<sup>25</sup> Potter (2004) 268–75 provides a useful narrative of the period, including Aurelian's policies in Rome.

<sup>26</sup> Potter (2004) 270; see *SHA, Aur.* 18.4 and 21.5–6; this tradition is echoed in *Amm. Marc.* 30.8.8.

<sup>27</sup> The best treatment of the building of the wall is Coates-Stephens (2012A); for later periods, see Dey (2011).

<sup>28</sup> Curran (2000) 16–17.

<sup>29</sup> Diocletian only visited Rome in 303; his colleague Maximian probably visited in 289 or 290, 294, and 299, as well as in 303. See Barnes (1982) 49–67.

<sup>30</sup> See Coarelli (1999A) and Santangeli Valenzani (2000A).

<sup>31</sup> This is analysed by Cullhed (1994); for the relationship between Maxentian buildings and ideology, see esp. Coarelli (1986) 1–35 and, more recently, Corcoran (2017).

city in 312 and also completed works on a new bathing complex on the Quirinal. The emperor also dedicated a series of Christian basilicas around the city, including one to S. Peter, on the Vatican, and the episcopal complex in the Lateran (Map 2).<sup>32</sup> Although Constantine only visited it on three occasions, the *Urbs* remained a focus of imperial generosity, in spite of the building of Constantinople as an imperial residence in the East. The government of the city was also radically changed, as a series of reforms led to the creation of a new administrative structure in the city, the late antique urban prefecture, which incorporated different offices and powers.<sup>33</sup>

The first Christian emperor set a model for the relationship between later emperors and Rome. Between the year of his death (337) and the visit paid by Theodosius in 389, the old capital was only visited by Constantius II in 357 (if we exclude the fleeting visit of Valentinian II during his escape from the usurper Maximus in 388).<sup>34</sup> As the court became more distant, the nature of imperial involvement changed: from the middle of the fourth century onwards, most secular public building consisted of restorations, and these became less frequent after the end of the century—a development that will be discussed in Chapter 2. Roman affairs remained a central concern of imperial legislators, and the traditional imperial services continued to attract vast governmental funds.<sup>35</sup> Rome was an imperial city, and the *populus Romanus* was still seen as closely connected with emperors.<sup>36</sup>

The importance of Rome's elite was also a distinctive factor in its history. Being the traditional seat of the Senate, the *Urbs* attracted aristocrats from all over the empire. Relatives and descendants of the imperial family also resided there, using their connections to further their interests and political ambitions. In 350, when the military commander Flavius Magnentius rebelled against Constantius II, in Gaul, his movement had the enthusiastic support of high profile members of the Roman elite, such as Fabius Titianus, then praetorian prefect.<sup>37</sup> In Rome, supporters of the Constantinian regime rallied behind Constantine's nephew Nepotianus. The latter's rule lasted for less than a month, ending in a violent civil conflict.<sup>38</sup> Members of the city elite were involved in the usurpations of

<sup>32</sup> The Maxentian works are analysed by Fiore (1981), Coarelli (1986) 1–35, and Cullhed (1994) 49–60; see also Curran (2000) 54–63 (for Maxentius) and esp. 70–115 (for Constantine).

<sup>33</sup> This is the topic of Chastagnol (1960); the prefecture will receive special attention in Chapter 1.

<sup>34</sup> See Zos. 4.45.4 and Seeck (1919) 274 for Valentinian. Constantius' visit is discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> See, for the reign of Valentinian, Schmidt-Hofner (2008) 289–336 (for imperial services) and (2015) for legislation.

<sup>36</sup> As we are reminded by an inscription seen on the Palatine Hill, recording the dedication of a forum built by Valentinian I and Valens to their Roman people (*CIL* VI, 1177 = *EDR* 114523: 'Forum populo Romano suo [dono dederunt]...').

<sup>37</sup> On Magnentius' career, see *PLRE* I, Magnentius; on his usurpation and support in Rome, Humphries (2015) 162–4. On Titianus, see *PLRE* I, Titianus 6.

<sup>38</sup> Humphries (2015) 162.



Magnus Maximus, in 388, and of Eugenius, in 394: in both cases, the court chose compromise over outright punishment.<sup>39</sup>

The *populus Romanus* also posed significant challenges, both as a consumer market and as a potential source of unrest. There is no real consensus with regards to the population figures of Rome, and this is particularly true for late antiquity.<sup>40</sup> Based on the figures recorded for the state-sponsored distributions of pork, scholars have proposed numbers as high as six to eight hundred thousand people for the time of Constantine. Others have pointed out that these numbers are probably too high, and that the figures available are more indicative of imperial generosity and propaganda than of the demography of the city.<sup>41</sup> Although extrapolations from figures recorded in texts should be treated with great caution, they should not be dismissed too quickly: the economic circumstances faced by the late Roman state suggest that emperors had limited means for using the *annona* as an overblown piece of political propaganda, and it is probable that although inflated this information indicates at least a plausible order of magnitude. The foundation and expansion of Constantinople in the fourth century were accompanied by the diversion of Egyptian grain from Rome to the new city, an innovation that added considerable pressure to the usual concerns of local administrators. The eternal city became, as a result, more reliant on grain from Africa and Sicily, and therefore more exposed to crises of supply and famines.<sup>42</sup>

This period was also marked by religious changes that redefined the identity of the city. Following Constantine, emperors and powerful aristocrats were enthusiastic sponsors of Christianity, showering the new religion and its clergy with funds, properties, and privileges. The Christian community flourished in the fourth century, even though it is impossible to determine the speed with which the Roman population converted.<sup>43</sup> The importance of Christianity in urban life is illustrated by the troubled succession of bishop Liberius in 367, which led to a civil conflict that required the intervention of the imperial authorities.<sup>44</sup> Evidence for the history of traditional cults after Constantine is much poorer in comparison. Paganism—a label adopted here for the sake of convenience, rather than to suggest any form of unifying system or identity—still had an important presence in Rome, as attested by a rich epigraphic record, as well as by Christian

<sup>39</sup> Matthews (1990) 223–52 for analysis.

<sup>40</sup> A useful discussion can be found in Lo Cascio (1997).

<sup>41</sup> See Mazzarino (1951) 222–37, Durlat (1990) 110–23, and Lo Cascio (2000) 56–61. For a sceptical view, see Purcell (1999).

<sup>42</sup> See, on the transfer, Durlat (1990) 42–8; Wickham (2005) 76. Panella (1999) discusses Rome's supply in general.

<sup>43</sup> Pietri (1976) 407–31 is the best account of this process; see also Curran (2000) 116–57 and Spera (2014).

<sup>44</sup> These will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

polemical texts.<sup>45</sup> Rituals continued to be observed and temples were still restored until the last decades of the century, but it seems unlikely that pagans ever put up an organized resistance against the consolidation of Christianity.<sup>46</sup> Although the evidence here is even more limited and biased than usual, it seems that pagan traditions lost space in the public life of the city, while continuing to be observed by a declining number of worshippers until quite late.<sup>47</sup>

### From imperial capital to Christian centre: the fifth and sixth centuries

The relationship between the imperial court and Rome changed during the first decades of the fifth century. Honorius (in the last years of his reign) and Valentinian III resided there for long periods, effectively adopting it as capital. Their example was followed by their successors, even if for shorter spells—an innovation that had a considerable impact on the political and social life of the city.<sup>48</sup> However, the realities of imperial power were not comparable to those of the time of Trajan or even Theodosius I. Although fifth-century emperors were still able to exert great influence in the West, their power was progressively restricted to a smaller area, as new ‘barbarian’ regimes were established in Gaul, the Iberian Peninsula, and North Africa. Their hold on the throne was exposed to the ambitions of different groups among the military and the court, while relying on a much smaller and poorer tax base to cover their financial requirements.<sup>49</sup> As a consequence, Rome’s importance as a centre of power declined.

This can be seen in terms of the physical evolution of the city. There are no significant building projects commissioned by the court in the fifth century, apart from the strengthening of the Aurelian Wall, carried out at the beginning of the reign of Honorius. These were impressive works that doubled the height of the wall and provided it with impressive towers and gates, but most of it was carried out with reused material.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, most new public structures consisted of Christian foundations.<sup>51</sup> It is not a coincidence that the most impressive of these,

<sup>45</sup> Terms like ‘pagan’ and ‘paganism’ can obscure the rich diversity of traditions that were still observed in our period, but they can still be a useful way of referring to them; see discussion in Cameron (2011) 14–32; also Lizzi Testa (2013) 31–5.

<sup>46</sup> See the essays collected in Salzman, Sághy, and Lizzi Testa (2016); also relevant, but incorporating other parts of the empire, Brown and Lizzi Testa (2011); Cameron (2011) 132–205 argues for a complete abandonment of paganism.

<sup>47</sup> See, for the continuity of pagan practices, Lizzi Testa (2007), (2009), and (2010).

<sup>48</sup> The return of the imperial court was pointed out by Gillett (2001). See, in particular, Humphries (2012). For later emperors, see McEvoy (2017).

<sup>49</sup> As shown by Oppedisano (2013) and, more forcefully, Harries (1994).

<sup>50</sup> The works were dedicated in 401–2, see *CIL* VI, 1188–90 = *LSA* 1306–8; for the works, see Dey (2011) 32–48.

<sup>51</sup> Map 2 locates the main churches and *tituli* in the city.

like S. Maria Maggiore (432–40) and S. Stefano Rotondo (468–83), were episcopal projects; most consisted of smaller local churches, *tituli*, commissioned by members of the clergy and the city's elite.<sup>52</sup> By the end of our period, the city's imperial image had acquired a decidedly Christian character.

Destruction, abandonment, and spoliation also helped to define the image of late antique Rome.<sup>53</sup> The city was sacked by conquering armies on two occasions, 410 and 455, and it was the stage for the conflict between the supporters of the emperor Anthemius and his general Ricimer in 472.<sup>54</sup> Contemporary accounts of these events paint a bleak picture of destruction, but archaeological evidence is usually problematic (to say the least). Not all traces of destruction found in the city can be dated with confidence, and other causes (natural or man-made) might have been at play.<sup>55</sup> It is not always the case, either, that invading armies would leave lasting damage. Rather than traumatic events, scholars now see the end of restorations and the progressive spoliation of buildings as a more convincing explanation for the decline of Rome's physical structures.<sup>56</sup> By the middle of the fifth century, different parts of the city were in the process of being abandoned, their monuments and houses becoming a quarry for building material. This has been observed, for example, for the Porticus Minucia (in the southern Campus Martius), the Basilica Hilariana (Caelian), the neighbourhood of the Temple of Diana (Aventine), and a residential block near modern-day Termini train station.<sup>57</sup> Abandonment and spoliation attest to the decline of the early imperial urban order, while also showing that a new city was in development. Throughout the *Urbs*, public buildings, houses, and churches were built reusing pieces of architectural decoration, bricks, and blocks of tufa, reworked to create a new and original architecture.<sup>58</sup> Aristocratic houses and Christian churches were built on top of previously existing structures, blocking streets and redefining neighbourhoods according to the new priorities of the city's secular and religious elite.<sup>59</sup>

By the early sixth century, it was not only the inhabited area of the city that was smaller: the size of Rome's population had also declined in a dramatic fashion. As the laws regulating the distribution of pork suggest, this population remained stable until the first decades of the fifth century, when it began to fall—possibly as a consequence of the events leading up to the sack of 410, but more likely because

<sup>52</sup> See Krautheimer (1980) 33–58; Pietri (1976) 461–557.

<sup>53</sup> See, for a general overview, Meneghini (2003).

<sup>54</sup> The best account of these events is Roberto (2012).

<sup>55</sup> As shown by von Rummel (2013) and Santangeli Valenzani (2013).

<sup>56</sup> A process charted in the fundamental work of Pensabene (2015).

<sup>57</sup> See, respectively, Manacorda (2001) 42; Paola Palazzo, in Palazzo and Pavolini (2013) 89–92; Quaranta et al. (2013) 191–2; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996A) 63–9.

<sup>58</sup> As shown by Pensabene (2015). For a comprehensive reconsideration of spolia, see Liverani (2004A). This issue will be considered in Chapter 2.

<sup>59</sup> See, for houses, Machado (2012A) 143–52; for churches, Guidobaldi (1989).

of the decline in the city's political and economic standing.<sup>60</sup> Demographic decline accelerated in the later part of the fifth century, and the city's inhabitants were probably reduced to 'a few tens of thousands', as suggested by a letter of Cassiodorus (533–5).<sup>61</sup> Although much smaller than in the time of Constantine, Rome was still home to one of the largest populations in the Mediterranean world when Byzantine soldiers arrived in Italy in 535, a worthy symbol of empire at a time when the Roman empire itself was changing.

As Christian festivals and rituals played a growing role in the city's calendar and daily life, the place occupied by pagan cults became progressively smaller.<sup>62</sup> What seems evident is that, by the beginning of the sixth century, the Christian Church was the dominating religious institution in Rome, and its bishop was the most important authority in the city. In many respects, the rise of Christianity and of the Church were important elements in maintaining Rome's status as a source of ideological and cultural prestige. The Rome that would emerge from the Byzantine wars in the later part of the sixth century was, in this sense, a worthy successor to the imperial capital.

### The late Roman senatorial aristocracy

As the city changed, so did its elite. In broad terms, the Roman aristocracy was a hereditary ruling class whose power was based on landed property, social connections, ancestry, and status.<sup>63</sup> During the imperial period, this consisted basically of members of the senatorial order, senators and their families recruited either through inheritance rights or imperial appointment. This was a very cosmopolitan group of men and women, who maintained links with provinces all over the Mediterranean. There were important differences in terms of wealth and social standing between the most powerful and successful senatorial families of patrician or consular origin, who could claim the title of *nobilis*, and the others.<sup>64</sup> Their diverse geographic, cultural, and economic backgrounds were unified by the legal

<sup>60</sup> See, for the laws, *Cod. Theod.* 14.4.4 (367), 14.4.10 (419), and *Val. III, Nov.* 36 (452), with discussion in Lo Cascio (2013) 414–17, and (for the sack) Meneghini (2013).

<sup>61</sup> As put by Lo Cascio (2013) 418. See Cass., *Var.* 11.39, recording that producers from Lucania and Bruttium should be paid 1,000 *solidi*—20 per cent of what was paid to producers from Lucania in 452 (recorded in *Val. III Nov.*, 36.1). See the comments of Elio Lo Cascio, in Giardina (2015B) 229–32.

<sup>62</sup> As argued by Salzman (1990) and (1999).

<sup>63</sup> See, on the concept of aristocracy, Powis (1984) 1–5 for a working definition; the most influential reference remains Weber (1991) 180–95; Cannadine (1996) 8–15 offers useful insights based on the modern British aristocracy. For the later Roman empire, see Salzman (2002) 19–31.

<sup>64</sup> See Badel (2005) 65–82 for the concept of *nobilitas* in the early empire. For the evolution of the *ordo* in the early empire, see Chastagnol (1992), esp. 97–120 on the modes of recruitment and 155–99 on social conditions and privileges.

privileges and duties associated with the rank of *clarissimus* and their connection with the Senate in Rome.<sup>65</sup>

Starting in the early fourth century, the senatorial order experienced profound transformations in its composition and identity, as well as in its social and political standing.<sup>66</sup> This process gained traction during the reign of Constantine (306–37), when the creation of a new Senate in Constantinople transferred the allegiance and interests of part of the *ordo* to the East. At the same time, the number of imperial posts giving access to senatorial rank was increased, including offices previously reserved for members of the equestrian order. As a consequence, the fourth-century senatorial elite was much larger and more diverse than ever before.<sup>67</sup> The social and political hierarchies that defined the Roman elite underwent a radical redefinition in this process. The traditional families that constituted the elite of the *ordo* responded to these developments by asserting their traditions and standing more forcefully.<sup>68</sup> As John Dillon showed, the opening of the title of *clarissimus* to new members did not lead to its devaluation, but to a greater need to refine the system of rank that regulated social precedence at the top of Roman society, as heirs to prestigious senatorial families now had to collaborate and compete with men promoted solely through imperial service to the same rank.<sup>69</sup> From the reign of Valentinian onwards, legislation was issued to specify the privileges and rights of holders of the titles of (in ascending order) *vir clarissimus*, *spectabilis*, and *illustis*, a process that continued into the fifth century.<sup>70</sup>

Scholars have recently emphasized the unity of the Roman senatorial order as an empire-wide elite, imbued with the same social values, education, and political conceptions.<sup>71</sup> Regional differences mattered, however, in the fourth and especially in the fifth century and later.<sup>72</sup> This was particularly true in the case of Rome. The Roman aristocracy, as considered in this book, consisted of the men and women of *clarissimus* rank (and higher) who lived or who were closely associated with the *Urbs*, even if just for a short term in office. They were simultaneously an imperial and a municipal elite. Although far more prestigious and influential than members of the *curiae* of Antioch or Carthage, for example, they too were defined by their association with a specific urban setting. Roman

<sup>65</sup> Eck (2000) discusses the diversity of the senatorial order.

<sup>66</sup> A process analysed by Heather (1998).

<sup>67</sup> See, for these developments, Jones (1964) 526–7; Heather (1998) 185–8; and Chastagnol (1992) 236–8.

<sup>68</sup> See, for a discussion of these developments, Roda (1993) 655–60.

<sup>69</sup> Dillon (2015), arguing against Jones (1964) 528 and his insistence in the devaluation of the title of *clarissimus*.

<sup>70</sup> The initial legislation appears as *Cod. Theod.* 6.7.1; 9.1; 11.1; 14.1; 22.4 (from 372). See Jones (1964) 518–29 and esp. Schmidt-Hofner (2010).

<sup>71</sup> e.g. Salzman (2002) 4 and esp. Weisweiler (2015) and (2016).

<sup>72</sup> As observed in Matthews (1990) 392–3; see the review of the original edition (1975) by Wormald (1976) 221. Harries (1994) 23–35 explores the specificity of the Gallic aristocracy in the fifth century, as well as its interactions with the Roman elite.

aristocrats were an integral part of the broader pan-Mediterranean elite, but their social, cultural, and political horizons were informed by the city's history, traditions, and institutions. As the senator Quintus Aurelius Symmachus put it, they were the 'better part of humankind' ('pars melior humani generis'); for the most powerful among his peers, they were the only true nobility of the Roman empire.<sup>73</sup> Rome's aristocracy was, therefore, a very specific and self-conscious segment of the wider senatorial order. Rather than 'domesticated' like other regional elites, it was prone to rebellion and dissent as much as to cooperation with the imperial government.<sup>74</sup>

The Roman elite was an open group, including imperial officials of provincial origin who had recently been promoted to senatorial rank as well as descendants of ancient and prestigious families whose presence in the city stretched back for generations. It was a competitive elite, in which its members fought against each other for imperial favour at a time when the court was becoming increasingly distant—and more exposed to the interests of other aristocracies. It was also a highly stratified group: only a small number had a seat in the Senate house (it is estimated that it could accommodate some three hundred men); fewer reached the highest offices, like the urban prefecture or the consulship; many pursued their ambitions as imperial officials, residing or temporarily serving in the *Urbs*; others eschewed political office and a public life altogether, while retaining a prominent place in city life.<sup>75</sup> Although this study will focus on the social and political strategies that defined this group as a whole, it is important to remember that not all aristocrats were able to compete in equal terms. Few families were as successful as the Probi or the Symmachi, for example, who attracted most of the attention in contemporary sources—which is why they will be used as an example more often than their less well-known peers in what follows.

And yet, in spite of these differences, these were men and women who lived and worked side by side, sharing ideals and values, pursuing similar lifestyles and cultural interests.<sup>76</sup> Even religious change, once held as a clear source of divisiveness, is now seen as a less dramatic fault line between members of the aristocracy. The traditional notion of a fierce 'pagan reaction' promoted by members of the Roman elite, advocated by Andreas Alföldy for example, has been rightly put to rest by the work of Alan Cameron, most notably in his monumental *The Last*

<sup>73</sup> As shown by Badel (2005) 90–1; for Symmachus, see *Symm. Ep.* 1.52.

<sup>74</sup> On the senatorial aristocracy, its values and political standing, see Matthews (1990) 1–31 and Forlin Patrucco and Roda (1986). For the idea of a 'domesticated' aristocracy, see Weisweiler (2015).

<sup>75</sup> The competitive character of the Roman elite is explored in Lizzi Testa (2004); for the Senate, see Chastagnol (1986); on the seating capacity of the Senate house, see Bartoli (1963) 54.

<sup>76</sup> The cultural and ideological unity of this group has been explored by G. Alföldy (1982); for a general assessment, see Näf (1995).

*Pagans of Rome*.<sup>77</sup> Where Cameron missed the point was in denying any religious significance to expressions of pagan piety, reducing members of the pagan elite to the level of ‘philistine landgrabbers’.<sup>78</sup> The vitriol directed by ecclesiastical writers against non-Christian rituals and institutions might have been marked by literary *topoi* and rhetorical strategies, but its very existence attests to the continued significance of these traditions. As scholars like Michele Salzman have shown, there was much that united pagans and Christians: the establishment of new spaces of worship, festive dates, and religious rituals did not lead to the obliteration of imperial Rome’s religious calendar, nor of its sacred topography.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, both Christian and traditional values and rituals stressed the importance of a common heritage, defined around the city of Rome, its spaces and history.<sup>80</sup> The conversion of aristocrats to Christianity was a slow process, and it was not until the end of the fourth century that the new religion became dominant in the Roman Senate, as Peter Brown argued.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, traditional cults continued to play an important role in the life of segments of the Roman aristocracy well into the fifth century, as we will see in Chapter 5. Christians and pagans had more in common than previous generations of scholars assumed. In fact, it seems that the modern picture of a dramatic ‘decline’ of paganism is due not only to the progress of Christianization but also to a change in the nature of the evidence, as pagan cults ceased to be celebrated in public and recorded in inscriptions or official texts.

The progress of Christianization was not the only major change that involved the Roman aristocracy after the beginning of the fifth century: this was also becoming a much smaller and hierarchical group.<sup>82</sup> We are more poorly informed about this period, and much of the surviving information is concerned with the wealthiest and most prominent senators. It seems clear, however, that members of the most powerful families nearly monopolized the highest public offices in Rome, playing a dominating role in the city. Rome’s political life was still complex and diverse, as different families and their branches vied for power and office.<sup>83</sup> But it was, in all respects, a much narrower affair than in the fourth century. As the western empire lost territories to other populations, Roman aristocrats had their careers restricted to Rome and Italy only. Aristocrats from other provinces still came to Rome, albeit less frequently—a development that resulted in a growing

<sup>77</sup> Cameron (2011); his views had already been expressed in Cameron (1977). See, for the traditional view, Alföldy (1937) and (1952), followed by Bloch (1963) and reinstated more recently by Ratti (2010) and (2012). For a measured discussion, see Lizzi Testa (2016).

<sup>78</sup> See Cameron (1999A) 109 for the expression.

<sup>79</sup> Salzman (1990) describes the middle of the fourth century as a ‘period of accommodation and assimilation in Rome’ (p. 231); Curran (2000) 218–59 focuses on imperial celebrations at the circus.

<sup>80</sup> As argued by Lizzi Testa (2010).

<sup>81</sup> See Brown (1961) and more recently Salzman (2002). *Contra*, Barnes (1995).

<sup>82</sup> See, for what follows, Machado (2013) 62–3 and Barnish (1988).

<sup>83</sup> As Cameron (2012) showed.

differentiation among the different regional elites.<sup>84</sup> This political fragmentation was confirmed by legislation issued between 440 and 450, exempting members of the Roman Senate from living or taking office in the city, effectively separating provincial aristocrats from their Roman counterparts.<sup>85</sup> The military troubles of the fifth century, associated with the economic difficulties of the time, represented a serious blow for senatorial fortunes, restricting their areas of investment to Italy and Sicily—and even in these cases they were subject to disturbances. On the other hand, this meant that senatorial influence was felt more heavily in the peninsula, and that Rome became more central than ever for senatorial strategies. As aristocrats played a growing role in the life of the *Urbs*, the city became more vital for their survival.

### The Nature of the Evidence

By the standards of classical scholars, the history of Rome in late antiquity is exceptionally well documented. Many aspects of city life are illuminated by a variety of sources, of different nature and produced with diverse aims in view. We are better informed about the late antique city than about any other period of its ancient history. Such wealth of material raises difficulties and challenges of its own, presenting diverse and sometimes conflicting information, making it harder to form a coherent picture of the city. The biased character of our sources can be seen both in quantitative and qualitative terms. It should not surprise us that not all neighbourhoods were excavated in the same systematic way; that the epigraphic record is richer for certain parts of the city, especially its monumental centre; and that virtually none of the extant literary evidence represent the point of view of the lower classes. These are issues that affect the work of most ancient historians. Perhaps more importantly, we are much better informed about the fourth century than about the subsequent periods. The amount and quality of material available becomes poorer in the decades after the Visigothic sack of 410, even if Christian writers and imperial legislators continued to pay attention to developments in the *Urbs*. At the end of our period, the *Variae*, the collection of official letters written and compiled by Cassiodorus for the Ostrogothic court, provide a wealth of information about Rome, offering few but precious insights into the political and social life of the old capital. Even in this case, what we have is

<sup>84</sup> A point made by Wormald (1976) 221–2; also Barnish (1988) 130–4. The most thorough discussion of a non-Roman aristocrat in Rome remains Harries (1994).

<sup>85</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 12.1.15 (before 443) and 12.2.1 (450). These laws were issued in the East, but were certainly also valid in the West: see Chastagnol (1996) 347.



a very partial picture, as scholars have recently highlighted the troubled political context in which the collection was first edited.<sup>86</sup>

Scholars have become more aware, in recent decades, of the complex nature of the evidence available, of its potential and limitations. This is true for all types of material, literary, archaeological, and epigraphic. Rome boasts the largest epigraphic record of the Mediterranean world in late antiquity, including religious dedications (pagan and Christian), honorific monuments, building inscriptions, and funerary texts (from simple records of names to long metric celebrations of the deceased).<sup>87</sup> Inscriptions have traditionally been mined for factual information about different aspects of the city's political, administrative, religious, and social history.<sup>88</sup> More recently, however, scholars have started to pay more attention to the original context of this material, considering their physical aspect, provenance, and audience, as well as their content.<sup>89</sup> Attention to their appearance and to the rhetorical strategies that they employ have provided valuable insights into how their commissioners sought to represent their values and position in society, emphasizing the ways in which different social, political, and religious relations were expected to be seen by contemporaries.<sup>90</sup> Whether pagan or Christian, honorific or funerary, late antique inscriptions were a product of a particular culture as much as a source of information, and it is in this sense that they will be considered here.<sup>91</sup>

A similar development can be seen in the case of late antique archaeology: the amount of material available increased exponentially over the past decades, and different approaches have gained currency. As honorific monuments and the architecture of public and private buildings have come under renewed scrutiny, scholars have emphasized the importance of understanding them in their social, political, and cultural context.<sup>92</sup> Public and private buildings are lived spaces, serving as arenas where social interactions take place at the same time as they help to give meaning and form to these interactions, as Luke Lavan has argued.<sup>93</sup> More attention is now paid to the so-called 'building process', i.e. the ways in which building commissioners organized funds, materials, and workers for their construction works.<sup>94</sup> Buildings are not seen as mere additions to the physical

<sup>86</sup> See Giardina (2006) 15–46; more recently, Bjornlie (2013) discussed the possibility of a Constantinopolitan context for the collection.

<sup>87</sup> For the sake of convenience, I will provide references to the main epigraphic *corpora* such as *CIL*, *ICUR*, and *AE*, followed by a reference to *EDR* and *LSA*, whenever possible: these have the advantage of being accessible online, besides making more systematic use of images.

<sup>88</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) for a good example.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, the considerations of Panciera et al. (2006).

<sup>90</sup> These are explored in the essays collected in Alföldy and Panciera (2001). For the case of Christian inscriptions, see the recent model study of Trout (2015).

<sup>91</sup> For a recent survey of these issues, see Bolle, Machado, and Witschel (2017).

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Mayer (2002) for public monuments; and Guidobaldi (1999) for houses.

<sup>93</sup> Lavan (2003A) and (2003B).

<sup>94</sup> DeLaine (1997) remains a fundamental reference.

environment anymore, but as products of social, economic, and political relations between patrons, builders, and users—a perspective that opens up new possibilities for the study of urban space. The city and its archaeological record are thus seen as part of a process of historical change, reflecting both material conditions and the ways in which late antique society was conceived and represented by contemporaries.

To a very large extent, however, our knowledge of the history of late antique Rome is shaped by the extant literary evidence. Legal texts, histories, administrative documents, calendars, poems, invectives, letters, theological treatises, and Christian sermons allow scholars to explore a vast number of issues, in much greater depth than for any other period of antiquity. As in the case of archaeological and epigraphic sources, scholars have become more aware of the historical context in which these texts were produced and circulated, treating them as products of a specific society, as much as a source of information about it. Texts are not read for their factual information only—although this remains important—but also for what their very existence reveals about social and political conditions. Imperial edicts, for example, are now seen as the result of a relationship that frequently extended from a local petitioner to the court; they were addressed to specific agents in Rome or in the central government; the way they were phrased is revealing of the ways in which imperial officials wished to be seen by their subjects.<sup>95</sup> A similar concern has led to a reappraisal of personal and official letter collections, from the correspondence of Jerome and Symmachus to the episcopal and imperial letters gathered in the *Collectio Avellana*—and the same can be said of the *Variae* of Cassiodorus.<sup>96</sup> A greater attention to the rhetorical strategies and agendas behind these texts—whether panegyrics, histories, or sermons—has allowed scholars to reconsider the divide between historical reality and its literary representation, acknowledging the role played by texts in shaping the perception of events by late antique contemporaries as well as by modern readers.<sup>97</sup> Whether epigraphic, archaeological, or literary, our evidence is as much a source of information as a representation of the past.

### Rome in the *Historia Augusta*

The challenges presented by the various types of evidence available for the study of late antique Rome appear most conspicuously in the puzzling work known as the *Historia Augusta*. Although not the most often cited source of information in this book, the issues that it raises and especially the complex way in which it combines fiction and history makes it worthy of special consideration. The *Historia Augusta*

<sup>95</sup> See, on the character of late Roman law, Harries (1993) and (1999) 36–76.

<sup>96</sup> See, for different letter collections (from Rome and beyond), Sogno, Storin, and Watts (2017).

<sup>97</sup> See for example, from a long bibliography, Kelly (2008); Wessel (2008); McLynn (2013).

is a collection of thirty lives of emperors, co-emperors, and usurpers, stretching from the reign of Hadrian (117) to Numerian (285),<sup>98</sup> purportedly written by six different authors during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine. Following the groundbreaking work of Hermann Dessau in 1889, no scholar nowadays accepts this date and authorship, and the recent consensus is that the work was the product of a single author working in the late fourth to early fifth century.<sup>99</sup> The difficulties do not end there: the lives are full of references to invented sources, fictional events, and anachronisms, which in turn gave rise to a veritable industry of studies, many of them presented in a specific series of colloquia starting in 1962.<sup>100</sup> As Ronald Syme observed in an influential study, the author of this text was an impostor, a master of historical romance, and his work an amusing piece of literature.<sup>101</sup>

In spite of its dubious status, the *Historia Augusta* remains a fundamental source of information for studies of late imperial Rome, covering a period (the second and third centuries) otherwise poorly documented. It narrates a variety of events that took place in the city, providing a wealth of information about its history and topography. The case of the *annona*, the imperial system of food distribution to citizens, is a good example: the biography of Septimius Severus is the only text to record the introduction of systematic distributions of olive oil by this emperor, and the same is the case for the biography of Aurelian and the distribution of pork and wine.<sup>102</sup> We find equally relevant information concerning imperial building projects in the lives of Hadrian, Septimius Severus, and Alexander Severus, for example, and these are generally regarded as reliable.<sup>103</sup> Throughout, the author of the imperial biographies shows a good knowledge of the topography of the city, including specific structures in the city centre and in the suburbs.<sup>104</sup> However, rather than simply narrating actual facts, this knowledge is used to convey specific messages, making frequent recourse to references and occasions that are recognizably fictitious.

The ideological reading of space offered by the *Historia Augusta* can be seen in a number of biographies that show the Senate meeting in the temples of Concordia and of Castor and Pollux in the Roman Forum (Fig. 3.1) to award titles to good emperors, to elect a censor, and to pass important decrees.<sup>105</sup> The Temple of

<sup>98</sup> There is a lacuna between the death of Gordian III and the capture of Valerian (260).

<sup>99</sup> See, for a useful survey of the history of the scholarship and an introduction to this text, Chastagnol (1994A); for a recent assessment, see Thomson (2012) 20–53.

<sup>100</sup> Currently published in the series *Munera* from Edipuglia (Bari).

<sup>101</sup> In Syme (1968), esp. 204–5 for his verdict.

<sup>102</sup> Respectively, *SHA*, *Sev.* 18.3; *Aur.* 35.2 and 48.1. This information is widely accepted by scholars; see Vera (2010) and Broekaert (2011).

<sup>103</sup> Respectively: *SHA*, *Hadr.* 19.9–13; *Sev.* 19.5 and 23.1; and *Alex. Sev.* 25.3–8. See, for Hadrian, the analysis of Boatwright (1987); for Septimius Severus: Benario (1961); for Alexander Severus, see Coarelli (1987).

<sup>104</sup> See, for assessments, Kolb (1994); also Behrwald (2009) 158–70.

<sup>105</sup> Awarding titles: *SHA*, *Alex. Sev.* 6.2 and *Prob.* 11.5 (Concordia); censor: *Val.* 5.4 (Dioscuri); *senatus consultum*: *Max.* 16.1.

Concordia appears at a particularly important moment: it was here that the Senate met, at the news of the defeat of Gordian I and his son Gordian II, to elect Maximus and Balbinus emperors, defying their enemy Maximinus Thrax.<sup>106</sup> These passages are fictitious, and—as Chastagnol showed—they reveal the influence of the works of Cicero in locating important senatorial meetings in these temples.<sup>107</sup> The *Aedes Concordiae* and the *Aedes Castorum* were the stage for important political developments in the Republican period, and had served as traditional meeting places for Rome's most prestigious political institution in previous centuries. The author of the *Historia Augusta* was well aware of these associations, and used these temples as a way of emphasizing the authority of the Senate and its role in imperial history. As we will see in Chapter 3, this antiquarian view of the political world would play an important role in the restorations carried out in the Forum in late antiquity.

More than the possible accuracy of the information it provides, the *Historia Augusta* is relevant for this study because of what it reveals about the social and cultural context of its production and circulation. It is widely agreed that its author was associated with the city of Rome and its elite, be it as an aristocrat, an aristocratic client, or as someone aiming at an aristocratic readership.<sup>108</sup> Although primarily dealing with emperors and frequently referring to events happening in distant parts of the empire, the old capital occupies a prominent place in the narrative, and a key role is assigned to the Senate—elements that indicate the author's sympathies.<sup>109</sup> The imperial biographies were, to a large extent, composed according to the priorities and conceptions of their social world, rather than as a piece of political or religious propaganda, as has been recently argued.<sup>110</sup> Although the factual information presented in these biographies should not be dismissed too quickly, in this study they will be considered primarily as a way of examining the ways in which members of the senatorial elite conceived the history of the city and its spaces.

### Space and Power in Late Antique Rome

Space, broadly understood as the physical dimension where social life unfolds, has traditionally occupied a prominent position in Roman studies.<sup>111</sup> Since the pioneering works of Rodolfo Lanciani and Christian Hülsen in the late nineteenth century, archaeologists and topographers have done much to improve our

<sup>106</sup> SHA, *Max. et Balb.* 1.1.

<sup>107</sup> See Talbert (1984) 118–20 for the fictitious character of these passages; Chastagnol (1987) for the influence of Cicero.

<sup>108</sup> See Syme (1968) 192–202; Chastagnol (1994A) CLI–CLXXIV; Thomson (2012) 54–69.

<sup>109</sup> As argued by John (1976) 148–76.

<sup>110</sup> Most recently by Ratti (2010) 185–276 and (2012) 105–78. *Contra*, Cameron (2011) 743–82.

<sup>111</sup> There is no space for an overview of these developments. For useful surveys (mostly focused on the Republic and early empire), see Patterson (1992) and (2010).

knowledge of the city, its spaces, and monumental complexes.<sup>112</sup> This can be most clearly seen in the work of Filippo Coarelli and his topographical examination of different parts of the city.<sup>113</sup> Paul Zanker showed the crucial role played by Augustus' extensive building projects in his political and cultural programmes, exploring the architecture, location, and appearance of the city, and others have examined the imperial character of the *Urbs* for different periods.<sup>114</sup> This type of approach has been particularly fruitful in the case of late antiquity, both in the study of imperial building works and of the development of a specifically Christian topography.<sup>115</sup> Imperial ceremonies and the administrative organization of the city have also attracted great attention, revealing the extent to which the early imperial metropolis was associated with its rulers and their priorities. Although the early empire has received most of the attention, later phases of Roman history have also been explored in this perspective.<sup>116</sup> Different elements of the city, including the gardens that surrounded it and the river, have been examined as a way of gaining a better understanding of its topography as well as of its commercial, productive, and cultural life.<sup>117</sup> Focus on specific structures and types of monuments, like the city walls and tombs (and catacombs), for example, has also illuminated important aspects of Rome's cultural and political history, while shedding new light on the evolution of its urban fabric.<sup>118</sup> Scholars are thus more aware of the importance of the built environment for our understanding of the history of the city.

The involvement of aristocrats in the physical definition of late antique Rome and its spaces has also been examined through different approaches. The city's political centre has been the subject of particularly important studies in this respect. As Franz Alto Bauer showed, Rome's monumental centre played a key role in the relationship between emperors and the local elite, as senators (especially urban prefects) used monuments and inscriptions to display their social position and identity vis-à-vis the imperial court.<sup>119</sup> Particular types of buildings, and especially houses and churches have also attracted great attention. Federico

<sup>112</sup> Lanciani, *FUR* remains the most useful graphic presentation of the subject; see also Lanciani (1897); Hülsen (1906).

<sup>113</sup> See, of a vast output, Coarelli (1983), (1998), and (2014).

<sup>114</sup> Zanker (1988); see also Favro (1996) for the Augustan period; Boatwright (1987) for the Hadrianic period.

<sup>115</sup> For the development of a Christian topography, see e.g. Reekmans (1989) and Fiocchi Nicolai (2001); for imperial projects, see Coarelli (1986), for example.

<sup>116</sup> Frascchetti (2005) remains of great importance (or. ed. in 1990). For imperial ceremonies, see Benoist (2005). For emperors and the city in general, see the contributions collected in Belayche (2001). For late antiquity, see Salzman (1990) and Curran (2000), for example.

<sup>117</sup> See, for the river, Le Gall (2005, or. ed. 1953). For gardens, La Rocca (1986); and Purcell (1987A) and (2007). For late antiquity, see Guidobaldi (2014).

<sup>118</sup> Borg (2013) for the case of tombs; Fiocchi Nicolai and Guyon (2006) for catacombs; Coates-Stephens (2001) and Dey (2011) for the walls.

<sup>119</sup> Bauer (1996); this picture must now take into account the more recent excavation of the imperial fora. See, for similar approaches to the Roman Forum, Humphries (2003).

Guidobaldi and Kim Bowes focused on the architecture and use of houses as a way of describing cultural and religious change, revealing the extent to which aristocrats were involved in the redefinition of the *Urbs*.<sup>120</sup> Following the example of emperors and their families, members of the elite were actively involved in the construction and embellishment of churches across the city and its suburbs.<sup>121</sup> Particularly historians have focused on space as a setting where aristocrats exercised and advertised their social power. Lellia Cracco Ruggini explored the presence of aristocrats in different neighbourhoods and the development of networks of clients in the city.<sup>122</sup> More recently, Salzman showed how senators responded to the sack of 455, asserting their political position in the context of the last decades of the western empire.<sup>123</sup>

However, in spite of their great importance for our understanding of Roman history, these studies still approach space as a physical support for social interactions, reducing Rome to a stage where history unfolds. By focusing on specific parts of the city or types of monuments, scholars have failed to take into account the fundamental role played by the city in its own history. Over the last decades, scholars from different disciplines have paid increasing attention to the role played by space in social life.<sup>124</sup> Rather than a mere setting where daily life unfolds, space is a fundamental dimension of human experience, in the sense that buildings, streets, and monuments help to define and give meaning to all forms of social encounters. Whether it is because of memories associated with it, because doors and walls limit access to it, or because of a specific set of rules regulating how it should be used, space is the context in which various forms of hierarchy are displayed. It is the setting where power is acquired, exercised, and (inevitably) contested, as well as the framework that gives meaning to these experiences. It is, therefore, a structural element in the way societies exist.

Space is a producer as well as a product of social life, be it because different social groups are involved in its actual construction through building works, or because it gains meaning through different forms of social agency.<sup>125</sup> As Charles Withers observed with regard to the notion of place in modern geographical studies, it is a primary element for the construction of society, not as a 'fixed spatial container', but because it is 'always in a state of becoming, always the result of historically-contingent processes and social practices'.<sup>126</sup> The same can be said

<sup>120</sup> Guidobaldi (1986) and (1999); Bowes (2008).

<sup>121</sup> See e.g. Fiocchi Nicolai (1994) and (2007); Machado (2011); Coates-Stephens (2012B), for a slightly later period.

<sup>122</sup> Cracco Ruggini (1997) and (2003).

<sup>123</sup> Salzman (2017); her article is part of a broader study on the subject of responses to crisis in late antique Rome, currently in preparation.

<sup>124</sup> The work of Lefebvre (1991), originally published in 1974, is still an essential reference in these debates. See also Gottdiener and Budd (2016).

<sup>125</sup> Rodman (1992).

<sup>126</sup> Withers (2009) 642, referring to the works of Tim Cresswell and Allan Pred.

of urban space: ‘space is a practiced place’, as Michel de Certeau observed.<sup>127</sup> Urban space can serve as a symbol and embodiment of a particular form of social-economic order, imposed by the state and the propertied classes through urban planning, legislation, the police, or the real estate market.<sup>128</sup> Different social groups can appropriate these spaces in different ways, giving new and unexpected meanings to it or even openly confronting power.<sup>129</sup> In this sense, urban space is always in the making, as the different social groups that inhabit and use it on a daily basis interact and change their physical environment, while displaying (and redefining) their own social hierarchies.

In the case of ancient Rome, historians and archaeologists have started to incorporate this perspective, showing the importance of modern theories of urban space for different phases of Roman history. The changing notions of public and private played a crucial role in the social and political conflicts that marked the late Republican period.<sup>130</sup> The geographic concept of neighbourhood has illuminated the role played by spatial associations in the late Republic, and the importance of the imperial reorganization of the city at the local level.<sup>131</sup> Recent years have seen a growing interest on different types of movement—including processions, the transportation of goods, and walking—as a form of gaining insight not only into the city’s topography, but also into social interactions and the people’s experience of the city.<sup>132</sup> Memory, too, has played an important part in this re-evaluation: the old Forum was progressively defined as a ‘place of memory’, a complex used by aristocrats to claim the role of guardians of Roman identity.<sup>133</sup> As Steffen Diefenbach showed for late antiquity, the Christianization of the city involved the redefinition of its sacred spaces and the memories associated with them—a process that had a crucial impact in the character and limits of Rome’s Christianity.<sup>134</sup>

It is in this sense that the concept of urban space is relevant for the study of late antique Rome. In contrast with the Flavian, Trajanic, or Severan periods, for example, the late antique redefinition of the city and its spaces was the product of a new social order that, in spite of its continuities, was fundamentally different from that of earlier periods. Roman aristocrats played a key role in this process,

<sup>127</sup> de Certeau (1984) 117.

<sup>128</sup> See, for historical examples of this approach, Porter (2000) and Harvey (2006); see also Gottdiener (1985).

<sup>129</sup> As argued by Rodman (1992); for an example of how order might be contested, see Yeoh (2003).

<sup>130</sup> See Russell (2016) for Republican Rome, and esp. pp. 8–24 for discussion of scholarly approaches.

<sup>131</sup> As shown by Lott (2004).

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, Laurence and Newsome (2011) and Östenberg, Malmberg, and Bjørnebye (2015); for late antiquity, see Machado (2010A).

<sup>133</sup> This is the argument of Machado (2006); see, more recently, Kalas (2015); Nora (1984) and his concept of *lieux de mémoire* has been particularly influential.

<sup>134</sup> Diefenbach (2007).

just as the city helped to shape their experiences and social standing. Throughout late antiquity, members of the senatorial aristocracy remained intimately associated with different aspects of life in Rome. By occupying imperial offices, they were responsible for maintaining public order, building and restoring physical structures, regulating imperial services like the *annona*, and managing the finances of the *Urbs*. Being successful politicians, they sponsored games and spectacles and took part in imperial ceremonials. As powerful patrons and house-owners, they protected their clients, supported different religious groups, and advertised their family's standing through magnificent funerals. Rome's urban space was, to the men and women of the senatorial aristocracy, more than just the setting where their lives (or part of them) were spent. The city was a vital element in their social and political strategies, the ways through which they sought to secure and enhance their standing and dominance over other groups in late Roman society.<sup>135</sup> In order to appreciate this relationship, it is necessary to go beyond specific places or structures and consider the city as an organic whole. Rather than moments of political drama, it is necessary to examine the everyday and mundane interactions that defined late Roman social life, making the city a lived space.<sup>136</sup>

*Urban Space and Aristocratic Power in Late Antique Rome* analyses the ways in which members of the senatorial aristocracy appropriated the city's urban space—by building, regulating, and using it—into their social and political strategies for acquiring, exercising, and displaying power. Control over the *Urbs* was a source of power as well as prestige, and the fortunes (and misfortunes) of imperial rule in the fourth and fifth centuries meant that no other group or agent was in a better position to exercise it in Rome than the city's senatorial elite. As I will argue in Chapter 1, senators were the necessary intermediaries in the troubled relationship between rulers (Roman and Ostrogothic) and the city, and their position before the central government helped to enhance their role in shaping urban space. Bishops and their clergy might have been a dominating force in other cities in the second half of the fourth century, but they would not enjoy the same prominence in Rome before the episcopate of Leo the Great, in the middle of the fifth century.<sup>137</sup>

The argument of this book is divided into three parts, each dedicated to a specific set of issues. The nature of the evidence favours a thematic approach, but I take into account the transformations experienced by the city and its elite over time, whenever this is possible. In Part 1: 'The definition of urban space', I explore the ways in which official and personal power helped to shape urban

<sup>135</sup> For the concept of 'strategy', see Bourdieu (1994) and (2000) 257–8.

<sup>136</sup> See, for this approach, the General Introduction to de Certeau (1984) xi–xxiv.

<sup>137</sup> As argued by Salzman (2010); see Shepardson (2014) for fourth-century Antioch.



topography. The first chapter discusses the impact of imperial offices and services on city life, looking at the ways in which aristocrats could turn the urban prefecture and the imperial system of food distribution into instruments for asserting their power in the city. Chapter 2 examines Rome's building industry, considering the role played by members of the Roman elite in the physical redefinition of the city.

Urban space is also defined by its use, as much as by buildings and institutions. Part 2, 'The uses of space', will explore the ways in which aristocrats incorporated the city into their political initiatives. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the Roman Forum, analysing its transformation from an imperial space into a civic and political centre that celebrated the Roman elite. Chapter 4 considers how senators used public spaces to celebrate their personal position in late Roman society, commemorating their public standing and personal power. The religious transformations that redefined the city are considered in Chapter 5. Whether as (pagan) priests, as magistrates, or as influential members of their religious communities, senators influenced different aspects of religious life, helping to shape the city's new religious topography.

The social and political roles played by elite houses are the focus of Part 3, 'Domestic spaces and the privatization of power'. Chapter 6 examines how aristocratic *domus* were used as a symbol of personal standing as well as a tool for advancing one's social position. Domestic structures impacted the very definition of urban space, as homeowners took over public areas and structures, incorporating them into the fabric of their dwellings. Chapter 7 will consider this issue as a way of understanding the relationship between official and personal power. Sitting somewhere between the public and the private realms, aristocratic houses were an essential element in the construction of Rome's urban space. As I will argue, the social dominance of aristocrats contained in itself the seeds of a new social order, dominated by the Roman bishop, and in which aristocrats played a much more modest—albeit still important—role. These developments will be considered in the Conclusion, bringing together the various threads and issues left open in the preceding chapters: although the demise of the late antique senatorial Rome and the rise of this new city cannot be analysed in detail, they too are part of this story.

The history of the Roman aristocracy in late antiquity was inextricably linked to the history of the city and its spaces—and vice-versa. Other groups and agents, like the imperial court, the *plebs*, and the Christian clergy, also played a defining role in the history of this period, and I will refer to them constantly in this book. Throughout late antiquity, emperors (and later kings) sought to reaffirm their control over the largest city in the Mediterranean; bishops and their clergy strove to ascertain their spiritual leadership in a city populated by countless gods; and members of the *populus* rioted and fought to secure their rights and privileges. And yet, no group was in a position as advantageous as the city's own elite to

handle all these pressures and to take advantage of the developments set in motion by them. Between the end of the third and the beginning of the sixth century, members of the senatorial elite were able to identify themselves with their physical environment and to influence the lives of their fellow citizens to an extent and in ways that had no parallel since the end of the Republic, and that would remain unmatched in the later history of the *Urbs*.

PART 1

THE DEFINITION  
OF URBAN SPACE



# Aristocrats, Imperial Institutions, and the Topography of Power

The late Roman state was a product of the political and institutional reforms of the late third and early fourth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The Roman government was profoundly reorganized during this period, both in the way it operated and in its relationship with its subjects. These reforms became more systematic during the reigns of Diocletian (284–305) and Constantine (306–37), who increased the presence and the pressure of the central administration over local communities all around the empire. They included a formidable expansion in the number of provinces and of the personnel required to manage them; the creation and consolidation of a hierarchy of dioceses and prefectures that reorganized imperial presence according to geographic lines and spheres of competence; and the development of a new political geography, with the establishment of imperial residences and centres of power in different parts of the empire—a process that culminated in the foundation of Constantinople in 330.

The creation of this new empire had a direct impact on the city of Rome. The new political geography influenced the political standing and influence of the former capital and its elite, even if its symbolic importance remained unchallenged.<sup>2</sup> As André Chastagnol showed in great detail, these administrative reforms changed the way the government functioned in Rome, concentrating powers and responsibilities in the urban prefecture.<sup>3</sup> Prefects and their officials became more involved in the control and regulation of different aspects of city life, tasks that frequently fell to members of the Roman aristocracy. This process also affected the prestige and powers of the agents responsible for governing the *Urbs*, establishing a new hierarchy of institutions, departments, and offices. Furthermore, it reshaped the city's political map, defining where power was exercised and where people could have access to it. The operation of important imperial services (especially the *annona*, the food dole system) was also redefined during this period, as successive emperors confirmed and extended the privileges of the *populus Romanus*, reorganizing the structures of dependence in the city.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for what follows, Jones (1964) 331–410; also Carrié and Rousselle (1999) 145–216.

<sup>2</sup> As observed in the Introduction. See also Grig and Kelly (2012).

<sup>3</sup> Chastagnol (1960); see also Sinnigen (1957).

<sup>4</sup> Jones (1964) 687; for a detailed discussion, see Chastagnol (1960) 296–334; see also Purcell (1999).

The aim of this chapter is to address these interrelated issues: the reform of the imperial administration in Rome, the reaction of the local aristocracy to it, and how these developments affected the configuration of a specifically late antique political topography. This will involve focusing on the local institutions and agents based and operating in the former imperial capital, more specifically the urban prefecture and its departments. Recent years have been marked by new approaches to the study of the Roman state. Governmental institutions are now seen in their social context, open to various forms of pressure from different social groups (including through corruption), and operating according to the social and cultural values of its time.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the city of Rome and its complex administrative machinery provide us with an ideal example of how institutional and personal power could be combined. Prefects and city officials did not govern the city on their own, nor were they free from outside interference. It is necessary to start, therefore, by considering the presence of the traditional rulers of the city—the emperor and his court—as well as the growing influence of the Christian church and its bishop. We will then focus on the urban prefecture, and the ways in which this institution helped to define and shape urban space. The final part of the chapter will explore the workings of the imperial *annona* and its social and political impact on late antique Rome.

## Emperor and Bishop

Rome's traditional imperial spaces were still prominent centres of power in late antiquity. In his panegyric celebrating Honorius' sixth consulship (404), Claudian asked whether the young emperor recognized his own Penates, his household gods, in the Palatine complex, reminding us that even emperors living in other cities could still be portrayed as closely connected with the *Urbs*.<sup>6</sup> Over the course of the first three centuries of imperial history, emperors and their families had bought, confiscated, and inherited a number of properties in Rome, incorporating different parts of the city into the imperial fisc. As a result, later emperors had different dwellings to choose from, according to their taste, convenience, and political needs.<sup>7</sup> Rome did not have one fixed political centre, even when the emperor was in town. Aurelian is said to have preferred the Horti Sallustiani and the Horti Domitiae.<sup>8</sup> Maxentius resided on the Palatine, but also built a complex on the Via Appia. Constantine favoured the Severan complex *ad Spem Veterem*, on the south-eastern corner of the city, where he later built S. Croce in

<sup>5</sup> The best example of this approach is Kelly (2004); see, for a theoretical discussion of these issues, Nugent (1994).

<sup>6</sup> Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* 53.

<sup>7</sup> For a good overview, see Guidobaldi (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Respectively, on the Pincian Hill and on the right bank of the Tiber: *SHA, Aur.* 49.1.

Gerusalemme as an imperial chapel. The *Domus Pinciana*, the magnificent palace on the Pincian Hill, was used by the court in the fifth century, and we know that this is where the Byzantine general Belisarius sojourned one century later.<sup>9</sup> However, in spite of all the possibilities on offer, it seems that emperors visiting or living in Rome usually resided in the Palatine complex, simply named 'palace' in the sources.<sup>10</sup>

Although the diversity of imperial complexes was the most powerful reminder of Rome's status as a political capital, there were other elements that supported this notion. Emperors made a significant impact on the city through their festivals, building projects, and edicts regulating daily life.<sup>11</sup> This impact was also felt through the more mundane operations of government, since a number of departments remained in the city. The use of the Palatine by Honorius and later by Valentinian III in the first decades of the fifth century is a good example of this fact. It was in the palace that Stilicho, Honorius, and the Senate discussed whether to wage war or buy peace during the Gothic crisis of 408.<sup>12</sup> It was there, also, that Valentinian III met the head chamberlain (*primicerius sacri cubiculi*) Heraclius and the military commander of the West, Aetius, to discuss the financial situation of the empire in 454.<sup>13</sup> Rome remained an important centre of government, where officials formulated imperial policies and oversaw their enactment. This is also indicated by the role probably played by the city's archives in the compilation of the *Theodosian Code*. Although it is impossible to be certain about the origin of all laws compiled, it seems clear that the vast majority of the laws originating from the West—perhaps as much as four-fifths—came from either Rome, Milan, or Ravenna.<sup>14</sup> However, although there are important continuities between the early and the late imperial periods, the presence of the court in late antique Rome should be seen in the context of the slow decline of imperial power in the West. After the end of the fourth century, one would have to look to Constantinople to find a city as tightly controlled by its rulers as early imperial Rome had been.

The Church also had a considerable impact on late antique Rome's political and administrative map. The building of churches, large and small, led to the development of a distinctively Christian geography.<sup>15</sup> Bishops became increasingly influential, not only because they held considerable moral and spiritual authority,

<sup>9</sup> For the different imperial palaces, see Guidobaldi (2004) and the chapters collected in Ensoli and La Rocca (2000) 91–119.

<sup>10</sup> Fifth-century rulers: Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* 1.10 and 53–76, with Zos. 5.29.6 (for Honorius); Priscus, Frags 30.1 (Valentinian III), 64.1 (Anthemius) and 65.1 (Olybrius). See also Anon. Val. 12.67, for Theoderic.

<sup>11</sup> See, for a comprehensive discussion, Curran (2000). <sup>12</sup> Zos. 5.29.6.

<sup>13</sup> Priscus, Frag. 30.1 (cited by John of Antioch, Frag. 201). It was during this meeting that Aetius was murdered.

<sup>14</sup> Honoré (1998) 141. See also Corcoran (1996) 29 for the *Codex Gregorianus*. For the difficulties of identifying the origins of laws, see Matthews (1993) 32 and Sirks (1993) 56.

<sup>15</sup> Curran (2000) 116–17. The formation of a Christian topography is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

but also because of the impressive material resources they controlled.<sup>16</sup> The organization of charity works had a crucial impact on Rome's social life. In the first half of the fifth century, bishop Leo wrote a series of sermons 'on the collections', advertising the virtues of charity and stressing that it should be practised through local churches.<sup>17</sup> Leo's insistence on using the local network of ecclesiastical buildings, which would receive donations and distribute them to those in need, indicates the growing importance of Christian spaces.<sup>18</sup> The role of bishops and the importance of the spaces associated with the Christian community continued to grow during the fifth and sixth centuries, as churches, monasteries, hospitals, and structures for sheltering those in need were founded in different parts of the city.<sup>19</sup> However, it was only after the end of the Byzantine war and the subsequent collapse of the secular administration that bishops came to play the defining role that characterized Rome in the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> From the end of the third century until the first decades of the sixth, it was the local (and not imperial), secular (and not ecclesiastical) institutions that bore the burden of managing the city. They played the crucial role in shaping the *Urbs*'s political topography, as well as in regulating the use of the city's spaces.

### Governing the *Urbs*

Governing Rome required a complex and vast administrative machinery. It involved, among other things, managing public services, maintaining public order, preserving the urban fabric, running the bureaucracy, and enforcing the law. Such a daunting task required a hierarchy of professional administrators, a system originally devised under Augustus and developed over the course of the centuries. The reforms of the late third and early fourth centuries turned the urban prefecture into a new institution, with extensive powers and control over all aspects of the city administration.<sup>21</sup> The many departments and officials subordinated to the urban prefect and in charge of the city were imperial agents, ultimately appointed by the court, responsible for enforcing public order.<sup>22</sup> And yet, the fact that they lived and worked in the *Urbs* meant that they had friends, clients, patrons, and interests connected to the city they were supposed to manage. There was no contradiction between the central administration and local interests;

<sup>16</sup> This process is discussed by Pietri (1976).

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Leo, *Serm.* 23.2 and 25.2.

<sup>18</sup> This is explored by Wessel (2008) 179–207; for a more comprehensive account, see Brown (2012).

<sup>19</sup> Described in Krautheimer (1980) 33–58.

<sup>20</sup> Krautheimer (1980) 59–87. See also Liebeschuetz (2001) 157–8, for the role of the bishop in the sixth century.

<sup>21</sup> Jones (1964) 689; see, for the creation of the late antique prefecture, Chastagnol (1960); see Chapter 2 for the chronology of these changes.

<sup>22</sup> Jones (1964) 690 and esp. Chastagnol (1960) 215–18.



one actually operated through the other.<sup>23</sup> The administration of Rome was an instrument for the imposition of imperial order but also a channel through which local demands and interests could reach the wider political world.

The importance of the local government in the maintenance (or disruption) of imperial rule is well illustrated by the events surrounding the acclamation of Maxentius as Augustus, in 306.<sup>24</sup> Zosimus records the involvement of two tribunes and an official in charge of the distribution of pork to the people, probably the *tribunus Fori Suarii* (the supervisor of the pork market), who offered large rewards to those who supported the usurpation. The vicar of the urban prefect, who tried to resist the attempt, was killed in the process.<sup>25</sup> The prefect himself, C. Annius Anullinus, supported the new regime and remained in office.<sup>26</sup> Officials of different rank could use their position to disturb public order in the largest city in the Mediterranean, helping to define imperial politics. Maxentius' takeover happened at a time when the government of Rome and the imperial services that ensured its survival were undergoing extensive reorganization. This reorganization was not limited to institutional measures, but affected the ways in which political, social, and economic power were exercised in the city. Aimed at increasing imperial control, the reform of Rome's administration expanded the role of the Roman aristocracy in the management of the city, redefining its political topography in the process.

### The urban prefecture

Between the end of the third and the beginning of the sixth century, the urban prefecture was the most powerful institution based in Rome. The urban prefect was the highest ranking authority living in the city, embodying local and imperial power.<sup>27</sup> Prefects had enormous political visibility, being the primary object of popular affection and wrath—even for events that were not strictly under their control, such as famines or the arrival of food supplies.<sup>28</sup> The identification of personal standing and public office was not a minor issue, and prefects could

<sup>23</sup> See discussion in Kelly (1998); for Italy, Cecconi (1994) 133–69.

<sup>24</sup> See Cullhed (1994) 32–3 and Curran (2000) 50–3.

<sup>25</sup> Zos. 2.9.3; see also Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 40.5, including the populace in the movement; for the *tribunus Fori Suarii*, see *PLRE* I, Lucianus 2.

<sup>26</sup> Zos. 2.10.1, erroneously identifying Anullinus as a praetorian prefect. See *PLRE* I, Anullinus 3; Maxentius re-appointed him to the same office in 312.

<sup>27</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 64–84 and also (1997).

<sup>28</sup> Famine: *V. Mel. Gr.* 19; abundance of supplies: Symm., *Ep.* 6.47. For examples of physical threat to prefects, see Amm. Marc. 19.10.1; also Symm., *Ep.* 4.54.2; *Relat.* 9.2; see, for Constantinople, the dramatic case of Monaxius, urban prefect in 408, whose headquarters were burned by the mob: *Chron. Pasch.* a. 412 (*PLRE* II, Monaxius).

sometimes be seen as having too much influence in the city.<sup>29</sup> It was an urban prefect, Priscus Attalus, that the Visigothic chief Alaric appointed as emperor in 409, during the crisis that preceded the sack of Rome. Attalus was, in many respects, a typical late Roman senator, and it was partly due to his official position in the city that he owed his imperial nomination (and later execution).<sup>30</sup>

As Chastagnol showed, emperors kept a close eye on ambitious aristocrats, managing their choice of prefects with care, sometimes appointing men with little or no connection to the Roman elite.<sup>31</sup> Constans appointed the eastern senator Ulpian Limenius, former proconsul of Constantinople, as both praetorian and urban prefect (an unusual honour) from 347 until his death in 349.<sup>32</sup> This was an exceptional intervention of the court in Rome's political and administrative life, which was extended with the subsequent choice of another eastern senator, Hermogenes, again for both offices.<sup>33</sup> Aristocrats coveted an appointment to the prefecture, and the nomination of a rival or a seemingly less deserving candidate did not pass unnoticed. According to Ammianus, Julian appointed Maximus prefect in 361, passing over the better-qualified Symmachus (the elder) in order to please the former's uncle, Vulcacius Rufinus.<sup>34</sup> The presence of *vicarii urbis Romae*, representatives of the praetorian prefect entrusted with the supervision of financial, military, and judicial matters, was another way through which the court could keep more assertive prefects and aristocrats in check.<sup>35</sup> The best-known example is Maximinus, a man of provincial origin who rose through imperial service until being made prefect of the *annona* in 368/370, when he was entrusted with an investigation into accusations against senators involved in sorcery. Maximinus was denounced for practising violence against aristocrats and their dependants, and his appointment as *vicarius urbis* in 370–1 led to the continuation of these persecutions—now clearly endorsed by the court.<sup>36</sup>

While in office, prefects had great influence over the lives of everyone residing or sojourning in the city. This included the capacity to regulate, control, and even to define the use of urban space, whether acting according to imperial orders or to their personal agendas. L. Turcius Apronianus is known to have persecuted sorcerers, executing some and driving others away from the city. According to Ammianus, he did it because he believed it was through sorcery that he had lost

<sup>29</sup> See the interesting case of Cyrus, prefect of Constantinople between 439–41, who was so popular that the emperor himself felt threatened, dismissing and exiling him: *Chron. Pasch.* a. 450; also *PLRE II*, Cyrus 7.

<sup>30</sup> *PLRE II*, Attalus 2. See Machado (2013) 59–62 for the context.

<sup>31</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 392–462 for a detailed analysis of appointments.

<sup>32</sup> See, on Limenius, *PLRE I*, Limenius 2. The troubled relationship between Constans and Rome is explored by Harries (2012) 191.

<sup>33</sup> See *PLRE I*, Hermogenes 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 21.12.24; on Maximus, see *PLRE I*, Maximus 17.

<sup>35</sup> See, on this office, Sinnigen (1959).

<sup>36</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 28.1.5–41 is a dramatic account of these events; see Lizzi Testa (2004) for an analysis of this account.

one of his eyes, a rather subjective reason for a systematic policy.<sup>37</sup> Other groups, such as foreigners, were customarily expelled from Rome at times of crisis, especially during food shortages.<sup>38</sup> Prefects also dealt with more day-to-day issues, such as enforcing building regulations, overseeing economic practices, defining times in which wine-shops could be open, and even when men of distinction were allowed to eat in public.<sup>39</sup> Prefectural edicts regulating different aspects of city-life were inscribed in marble and displayed in various public spaces, such as the Basilica Iulia and the Pantheon, serving as visual reminders of the prefect's power.<sup>40</sup> The latest of these edicts (of which the text survives) is from the end of the fifth century. It consists of a decree issued by the urban prefect Claudius Iulius Eclesius Dynamius around 488, regulating prices to be paid to the millers (*molendinarii*) on the Janiculum, and it shows that the practice of displaying edicts and decrees continued until a very late date.<sup>41</sup> The concentration of powers in the hands of the prefect and his officers was, therefore, one of the defining aspects of everyday life in late antique Rome. It is worth asking, in this context, what role did this institution play in the definition of the city's topography of power?

### The spaces of the prefecture

Political interaction between urban prefects and the people could take place in various types of spaces, with different degrees of institutionalization. Prefects seem to have used different parts of the city for various purposes. The prefect Leontius (355–6) confronted an angry mob from his official vehicle near the Septizodium, reminding us that prefects could exercise their power anywhere.<sup>42</sup> Apronianus, prefect in 362–4, conducted trials in the Colosseum, probably with the intent of maximizing the visibility of his power.<sup>43</sup> However, although our sources are frustratingly vague in their references to the spaces where imperial officials and the population of Rome interacted, it seems clear that the most important places for these occasions were actually purpose-built structures, located in specific parts of the city. These were the different *secretaria* mentioned in our texts, as well as the more important complex of the Praefectura Urbana, on the Velia.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Amm. Marc. 26.3.1–5.

<sup>38</sup> e.g. Amb., *De offic.* 3.45–51; Symm., *Ep.* 2.7; Amm. Marc. 14.6.19; Val. III, *Nov.* 5.

<sup>39</sup> See Amm. Marc. 27.9.10 and 28.4.4.

<sup>40</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 1766 = 41328 = *EDR* 093563 (Basilica Iulia), *CIL* VI, 9920 (Pantheon), and 1770 = *EDR* 111542 (near S. Pietro in Vincoli).

<sup>41</sup> *CIL* VI, 1711 = *EDR* 111468; see *PLRE* II, Dynamius 2 for the date.

<sup>42</sup> Amm. Marc. 15.7.4.

<sup>43</sup> Amm. Marc. 26.3.2; the visibility of the prefect is emphasized by the remark that his behaviour 'was seen as cruel' ('atrox visus est'); see Chastagnol (1960) 251.

<sup>44</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 243–53 is a useful starting-point for this discussion.

*Secretarium* was a term specifically used in late imperial sources to designate a courtroom reserved for secret proceedings.<sup>45</sup> In the course of the fourth century, imperial legislation tried to regulate the use and attendance of *secretaria* of judges all over the empire. In Rome and in other parts of Italy, inscriptions datable to the 350s onwards record the construction and dedication of these structures, always related to political or judicial authorities: in the case of the *Urbs*, the Secretarium Tellurensense and the Secretarium Senatus.<sup>46</sup> Symmachus mentions, in a report to the court, holding an audience in a structure that he identified as the Secretarium Circi.<sup>47</sup>

Only special cases could be taken to this court, and only high-ranking officials and men of illustrious rank (i.e. *virii illustres*, the elite of the senatorial class) could enter this courtroom. The reason was to prevent honourable people from being abused.<sup>48</sup> Aimed at ensuring the secrecy of important cases and preserving the dignity of the people involved, *secretaria* gave opportunities for personal gain and abuses of power. A law addressed to the *praefectus urbi* Pasiphilus, in 395, explicitly condemned officials who accepted bribes to let people enter a secluded courtroom. In late antique Rome as elsewhere, economic power could help cross social barriers, even those marked by the curtain that restricted access to a judge.<sup>49</sup> A *secretarium* was, therefore, a space where prefects and other high-ranking officials could exercise their power more freely, simultaneously away from the eyes of the public and more exposed to the pressure of their peers.

In 384, the prefect Symmachus mentioned that Fulgentius, a senator who had interfered in a legal case, came to the *secretarium* of the circus to explain his actions, suggesting that this was a permanent structure.<sup>50</sup> He was probably referring to the Circus Maximus, as we know that the hippodrome in Constantinople had a courtroom used by the praetorian prefect of the East.<sup>51</sup> Drawing on this analogy, Chastagnol suggested that in the case of Rome the prefect's *secretarium* should have been located in the short side of the circus, towards the Tiber and next to the Forum Boarium.<sup>52</sup> It is tempting to identify this structure with the large public building of rectangular shape, fronted by two long flights of steps next to each other that was excavated in this area at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup> A more recent

<sup>45</sup> See Nash (1976) 192.

<sup>46</sup> For Rome: *CIL* VI, 1718 = *EDR* 111471 (Secretarium Senatus) and *CIL* VI, 31959 = 37114 = *EDR* 071667 (Secretarium Tellurensense); Italy: *AE* 1991, 516 = *EDR* 080911 (from Luceria, in Puglia), and *AE* 1996, 475 = *EDR* 100739 (from Bovianum, in Samnium).

<sup>47</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 23.9.

<sup>48</sup> As stated in *Cod. Theod.* 6.26.7, from 396. See also *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.7, to the provincials (331); 6.7.1 (372) and 2.1.8 (395) to Rome; 6.26.5 (389) to Gaul; also 11.7.20 and 13.9.6 (both from 412) to Africa.

<sup>49</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 2.1.8.3. See also 1.16.7, suggesting that the same was also true in the provinces.

<sup>50</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 23.9.

<sup>51</sup> Recorded by Lydus, *De mag.* 3.19.

<sup>52</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 252–3.

<sup>53</sup> The surviving remains measure approximately 15 m long by 21 m wide. See Pietrangeli (1940). A Mithraeum was installed beneath the staircase, probably in the third century. See Coarelli (2008) 420–2, for the suggested identification.

hypothesis locates it in the area of the Circus Flaminius, where a building with late antique phases was excavated in the 1990s.<sup>54</sup>

Another possible structure of this type is mentioned in a medieval description of Rome, where the now destroyed Church of S. Ursus is identified as the *Secretarium Neronis* (near modern-day Ponte Vittorio Emanuele, in the Campus Martius).<sup>55</sup> Rodolfo Lanciani recorded ancient structures during the demolition of the church in 1889, including an apsidal wall built with red and yellow bricks, with a diameter of 3.7 m.<sup>56</sup> It was Ernest Nash who suggested that the medieval writer might have recorded the memory of a late antique courtroom, observing that the name of the building probably derived from the bridge identified in the Middle Ages as the *Pons Neronianus*.<sup>57</sup> This suggestion is supported by two other elements. In the first place, because the use of a term as specific as *secretarium*, which retained its meaning as a 'room with restricted access' in the Middle Ages, suggests that the function of the building was an important element in its identification.<sup>58</sup> In the second place, by the fact that the same text that mentions the *secretarium* records the existence, in this same part of the city, of a *palatium Cromatii praefecti*, in the area of S. Stephanus in Piscina.<sup>59</sup> Medieval Romans clearly saw this part of the city as connected to the prefecture. The existence of spaces like the prefectorial *secretaria*, where high imperial officials and their peers could meet was an important element in late antique Rome's topography of power. Although what went on inside was blocked from public view, these spaces were made conspicuous by the fact that they were located in busy parts of the city.

The main prefectorial offices—the Praefectura Urbana—occupied different structures in the city centre, an area that was undergoing important transformations at this time.<sup>60</sup> These included the Vespasianic Temple of Peace, a complex connected with the urban prefecture, as suggested by its architecture, decoration, and use (Fig. 1.1). The building, a rectangular structure surrounded by a porticus with grand rooms on one of the short ends and a garden in the centre, had a clear influence on the architectural design of the so-called Library of Hadrian, in Athens, where the archives of the provincial governor were kept. The official function of the Temple of Peace is also suggested by the fact that it was here that the Severan marble plan of the city, a cadastral map, was affixed. It also housed the

<sup>54</sup> Tucci (2007) 491.

<sup>55</sup> Valentini and Zuchetti, *Codice* III, 49. The oldest manuscript is from the twelfth century. For the church, see Hülsen (1927A) 501–2.

<sup>56</sup> See *Cod. Vat. Lat.* 13039, 23 v. (ed. Buonocore vol. 3 (2000) 10–11).

<sup>57</sup> Nash (1976) 193. On the bridge, see Liverani (1999A).

<sup>58</sup> It could designate both 'sacristy' and 'courtroom for secret proceedings': Du Cange (1840–50) s.v. 'secretarium'.

<sup>59</sup> Valentini and Zuchetti, *Codice* III, 63–4. It is also mentioned as near the *pons Neronianus* in Benedict's *Ordo Romanus* (Valentini and Zuchetti, *Codice* III, 219).

<sup>60</sup> See Coarelli (1999B), for the spaces of the urban prefect. For the city centre, see Meneghini (2003).

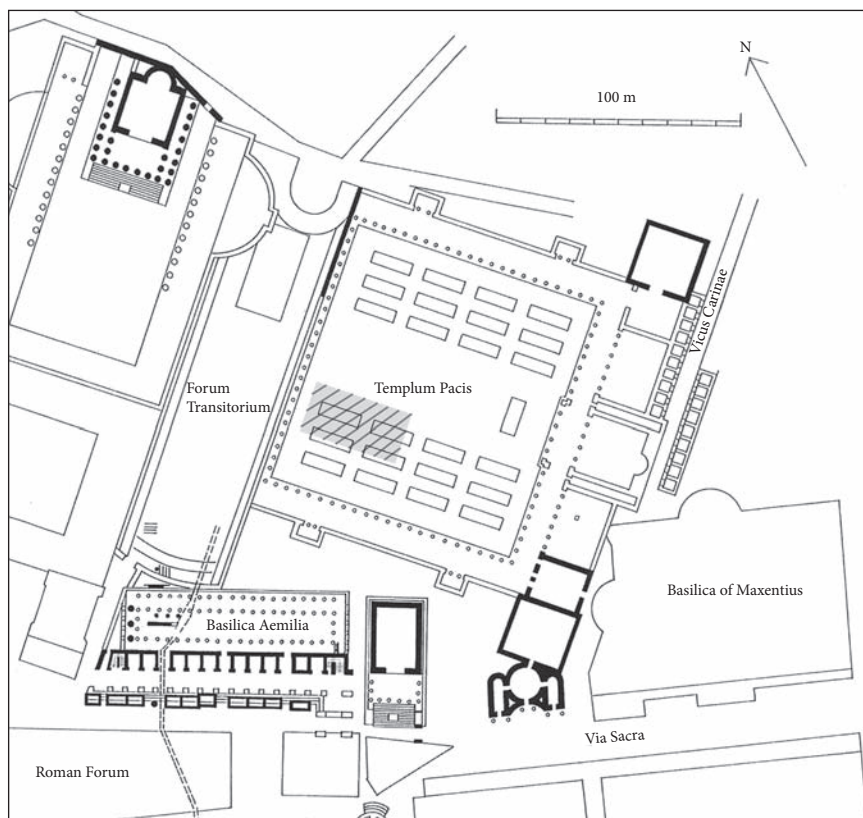


Fig. 1.1. The Basilica of Maxentius and the Temple of Peace (with area of Maxentian works indicated).

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from K. S. Freyberger, *Das Forum Romanum*, Mainz 2012, Abb. 80, with the author's kind permission.

Bibliotheca Pacis, one of the many archives in the city, a fact that supports the identification of this structure as an administrative centre.<sup>61</sup>

The Temple of Peace was thoroughly transformed at the beginning of the fourth century, when part of its courtyard was converted to a commercial function. This refurbishment probably took place during the reign of Maxentius (306–12), as suggested by a brick stamp found during the excavations, after the great fire that destroyed the Temple of Venus and Rome, leading to the complete renewal of this part of the city.<sup>62</sup> The grand rooms that housed official functions on the short south-west side, including the altar to Peace, were spared, and

<sup>61</sup> See Coarelli (1999C) and La Rocca (2001) 195–207. For the architecture of the complex, see now Tucci (2017), esp. 3–71 for the Vespasianic phase. For the marble plan and the prefecture, see the considerations of Guglielmo Gatti, in Carettoni et al. (1960) 216.

<sup>62</sup> Rizzo (2001) 241–3. For the fire: *Chronographus* a. 354 (MGH.AA 9, 148). Tucci (2017) 492–3 suggests a later date, but overlooks the destruction caused by the fire.

continued to be used in later periods: most of its marble pavement remains *in situ*.<sup>63</sup> At approximately the same time, a circular building was erected by Maxentius (the so-called Temple of Romulus), connecting this 'official' part of the structure to the Via Sacra and the Roman Forum.<sup>64</sup> As a result, the fourth-century monument was able to host not only a magnificent collection of statues, but also administrative and commercial activities. It is not a coincidence that the earliest references to this area as a 'forum', and not just a 'temple', are from this period, suggesting a new emphasis on its function.<sup>65</sup> When a Christian mob came to the Forum Vespasiani to threaten the urban prefect and the *vicarius urbis*, during the crisis that involved the election of bishop Boniface in 418, they came to this area precisely because it was a space of the urban prefecture.<sup>66</sup>

The late antique Temple of Peace also had the advantage, as an administrative centre, of being conveniently located close to the massive and (then) recently built Basilica of Maxentius, a building that was very likely used for judicial functions.<sup>67</sup> Most importantly, the Vespasianic complex was in the vicinity of the Praefectura Urbana, the central headquarters of the late antique urban prefecture, corresponding nowadays to the area between Maxentius' basilica, the Baths of Titus, and the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli (see Map 1). The location of this building in this area is suggested by a large number of inscriptions related to urban prefects of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>68</sup> These include bases of statues moved for the embellishment of the area,<sup>69</sup> bases of honorific statues dedicated to emperors and aristocrats,<sup>70</sup> as well as two prefectorial edicts issued in the late fourth century.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, a large number of late antique and early medieval acts of martyrs refer to the questioning, torture, and execution of Christians in the urban prefecture, in the vicinity of the Temple of Tellus in this same area.<sup>72</sup>

The exact location of the Praefectura Urbana remains debatable, but it is possible to have a good idea of the type of complex that housed the most powerful administrative office in Rome. The most important inscription found in the area

<sup>63</sup> Brief report in *Forma urbis*, June (2005) 10 and October (2005) 17.

<sup>64</sup> See Fiore (1981) 63–6. The original structure and its late antique changes are discussed in detail in Tucci (2017) 500–56.

<sup>65</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.10.14; see also Coll. Avell. 29.4; Proc., Wars 8.21.11–14 (mentioning statues).

<sup>66</sup> Coll. Avell. 29.4–5. See also Coarelli (1999C).

<sup>67</sup> Convincingly suggested by Coarelli (1986) 31–3 and more recently in Coarelli (2010).

<sup>68</sup> See Lanciani (1892); more recently Amoroso (2007) and Marchese (2007).

<sup>69</sup> *CIL* VI, 1120b = 1656c = *LSA* 1088; *CIL* VI, 1166c = 1656b = *LSA* 1283; *CIL* VI, 1656a = *LSA* 1338; *CIL* VI, 40783b = 41335a = *LSA* 1562; *CIL* VI, 41391b = *LSA* 1523. Amoroso (2007) 72 includes also *CIL* VI, 1657, but this was found on the other side of the Baths of Trajan.

<sup>70</sup> *CIL* VI, 3790 = 31399 = *LSA* 1489 to Constantius II; to aristocrats: also *CIL* VI, 41332 = *LSA* 1252 and possibly *CIL* VI, 32002 = 37115 = *LSA* 1537. Also found in this area, but probably from domestic contexts: *CIL* VI, 1696 = *LSA* 1401 and *CIL* VI, 1697 = *LSA* 1402 (respectively to husband and wife); and *CIL* VI, 1714 = *LSA* 1270 (to the wife of a prefect, by a personal client).

<sup>71</sup> *CIL* VI, 1770 = *EDR* 111542 (from 362–4) and *CIL* VI, 31893 = 41329 = *EDR* 093564 (after 374). See *PLRE* I, Apronianus 10 and Bassus 20 for the dates.

<sup>72</sup> See Delehay (1897) 218–21.

(in two copies) records works carried out by the urban prefect Iunius Valerius Bellicius (408/23), who rebuilt 'the *porticus* with offices adjacent to the tribunals of the Secretarium Tellurense', restoring 'the dignity of the urban headquarters'.<sup>73</sup> As the inscription makes clear, the scale and complexity of the functions of the urban prefect were housed in an accordingly magnificent complex. It consisted of a porticoed area, embellished with statues (including honorific ones), where official edicts were posted; it contained offices, connected to the *porticus*, where different services of the city administration were carried out. The inscription mentions the Secretarium Tellurense as an autonomous structure adjacent to the larger part of the prefecture that presumably took its name from the Temple of Tellus nearby. There is no firm evidence to locate this courtroom, but Filippo Coarelli convincingly identified it as the northern apse of the Basilica of Maxentius.<sup>74</sup> This is a sizeable space with niches for statues, a tribunal, and fittings for doors that would make it an adequate venue for the prefect's secluded courtroom. Symmachus mentions, when prefect in 384, an audience that he and the *vicarius urbis* held together in one of the prefect's courtrooms. It is probable that the *vicarius* had his office in this same area, perhaps in the prefecture itself, but this cannot be proved. In any case, the fact that this official brought his own staff to the meeting indicates that Symmachus' courtroom must have been spacious enough to house a large attendance—possibly the Secretarium Tellurense itself.<sup>75</sup>

The different tribunals and courtrooms scattered around the city, the Temple of Peace, the Basilica of Maxentius, and especially the complex of the Praefectura Urbana, were fundamental elements in the shaping of late antique Rome's political topography. These were spaces where official and public power were made accessible to late antique Romans, stages where personal influence and prestige were displayed, and where the decisions that affected city life were made. The ivory diptych issued on the occasion of the appointment of Rufius Probianus to the post of *vicarius urbis Romae* at the beginning of the fifth century, now in Berlin (reproduced as Frontispiece), gives a good idea of the impression that such spaces could make. The *verso* of the panel (on the left) shows Probianus in office, sitting on an elevated seat in what looks like an apsidal space with an elaborate architectural decoration, including curtains and columns with Corinthian capitals. He holds the codicil with his appointment on his lap, accompanied by assistants taking notes; the portraits of two (unidentified) emperors stand behind him. The architectural setting magnified the authority and centrality of the official,

<sup>73</sup> *CIL* VI, 31959 = 37114 = *EDR* 071667: '[Salvis d]d(ominis) nn(ostris) inclytis semper Augg(ustis), / [po]rticu[m] cum scriniis Tellurensis / secretarii tribunalib(us) adherentem, / Iunius Valerius Bellicius, v(ir) c(larissimus), praefectus urbi(i), / vice sacra iudicans, restituto / specialiter urbanae sedis honore / perfecit'. The inscription was found broken in two near S. Pietro in Vincoli. *CIL* VI, 40803 = *EDR* 093152 is a similar inscription, probably from the same area, but its fragments were found in different parts of the city.

<sup>74</sup> See Coarelli (2010) 136–44.

<sup>75</sup> *Relat.* 23.4–5; see also 23.13 and 26.3.



while the decoration (including the imperial portraits) highlighted his special status. The location was, to all effects, a statement of power as much as a venue for judicial hearings and administrative decisions.

The reform of the urban prefecture in the late third and early fourth centuries transformed the political map of the city, enshrining in the cityscape different spaces connected to an official (and his subordinates) with unprecedented power to regulate, control, and punish the inhabitants of Rome. Scholarship dealing with this part of the city has traditionally concentrated its attention on the Roman and the imperial *fora*, both for their splendour and their state of preservation. However, it was the neighbouring Praefectura that dominated the area, providing a focus for the political, judicial, and bureaucratic dealings of Roman citizens, irrespective of their rank. The headquarters of the urban prefect were undoubtedly an important focus of administrative activity already in the early imperial period. However, it was only in the context of the late antique city that this institution came to play such a dominant role in the cityscape. More than the imperial palaces and churches that dotted the *Urbs*, it was the prefectural complex that attracted people of all conditions, under the authority of an office that more often than not was occupied by a member of the city's aristocracy.

### City administration and local power

It is impossible to know how many officials worked in the urban prefecture. The early fifth-century *Notitia dignitatum*, a document recording the administrative organization of the empire, records as 'under the direction of the prefect' departments as important as the prefecture of the *annona*, the *vigiles*, and the service of the aqueducts. As part of his *officium*, it records notaries, archivists, and personnel in charge of the census.<sup>76</sup> Even if we have no idea of the actual numbers, we know that it was through the agency of these officials that the inhabitants of the city experienced the local government.<sup>77</sup> We should not let bureaucratic lists impress us too much, however. The prefect's authority over those in 'his office', or 'under his direction' (to quote the *Notitia*) was only limited, since the majority of these were employed by the imperial bureaucracy, and often were not appointed by the prefect himself.<sup>78</sup> Many were actually appointed following recommendations by other officials, whereas others simply bought their posts, as legislation and letters amply demonstrate.<sup>79</sup> As a result, we

<sup>76</sup> *Not. dig. occ.* 4; the information concerning the western empire seems to have been updated until the beginning of the fifth century. On the nature of this text, see Clemente (2010).

<sup>77</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 224–43.

<sup>78</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 218; see the complaints of Symmachus, *Relat.* 34.6.

<sup>79</sup> Discussion and references in Kelly (1998) 172.

know of officials who used their positions for political manoeuvring, attacking the prefects whom they were supposed to assist.<sup>80</sup>

The operations of the urban prefecture were not restricted to this central departmental organization. Since the beginning of the empire, the city had been divided into fourteen administrative regions, which in their turn were subdivided into local neighbourhoods, *vici*. Augustus reorganized these two forms of social and political circumscriptions, redefining them as administrative and political units. This was a way of increasing the *Princeps's* hold over the city, down to the level of its individual neighbourhoods.<sup>81</sup> By the beginning of the second century, the administration of each one of the fourteen regions had been put under the authority of a *curator regionum*, usually an imperial freedman directly subordinated to the emperor.<sup>82</sup> During the reign of Alexander Severus (222–35), *curatores* were allegedly raised to consular (senatorial) rank and placed under the supervision of the urban prefect.<sup>83</sup> Being derived from the *Historia Augusta*, this information cannot be verified, but we know that by the time of Diocletian *curatores regionum* were already men of consular rank.<sup>84</sup> As a result, members of the Roman aristocracy became involved in the administration of the city's regions at the same time that their more prestigious peers were taking over the prefecture and the government of the city as a whole. Roman aristocrats were thus offered further opportunities to establish links of patronage with specific parts of the city. This is well illustrated by a series of statue bases dedicated in various cities in Campania, in which the inhabitants of different city regions proclaimed their loyalty and their links with provincial governors and local patrons.<sup>85</sup>

There is also some information about the evolution of the individual neighbourhoods and their management, including for the late antique period. Traditionally, a *vicus* designated the buildings on both sides of a street, and it served as a focal point for social, political, and religious life.<sup>86</sup> After the Augustan reform, it was at the level of each *vicus* that essential operations like fire fighting, policing, the supervision of the water supply, and even the *census* were carried out. Annually elected *vicomagistri* (four per *vicus*) of freedmen rank were given the task of supervising these circumscriptions.<sup>87</sup> The focal point of each neighbourhood was its *compitum*, the crossroad shrine, a space frequently associated with a monument or a statue, where residents could meet and also display their piety and

<sup>80</sup> As Dorus, *centurio rerum nitentium*, in 351: Amm. Marc. 16.6.2.

<sup>81</sup> See Suet., *Augustus* 30.1, for the creation of the system. See also Frascchetti (1999B).

<sup>82</sup> See Frascchetti (1999B) 198 and esp. Panciera (2006), for this evolution.

<sup>83</sup> *SHA*, *Alex. Sev.* 33.1.

<sup>84</sup> As shown by Nasti (1999), discussing *CIL* X, 3732 = *LSA* 1928; *CIL* XIV, 2078 = *LSA* 1675; and *AE* 1973, 136 = *LSA* 401.

<sup>85</sup> e.g. *CIL* IX, 1569 = *LSA* 1730 (Benevento); *CIL* X, 1256 = *LSA* 1872 (Nola), *CIL* X, 1492 = *LSA* 1901 (Naples), *CIL* X, 1695 = *LSA* 332 (Pozzuoli), and *CIL* X, 3857 = *LSA* 1940 (Capua). See Camodeca (1977).

<sup>86</sup> See Lott (2004) 13–18 for the definition; also Tarpin (2002) 137–74.

<sup>87</sup> Lott (2004) 117–26; Tarpin (2001) 755–7; see esp. Lo Cascio (2007) 147–8.

loyalty towards the regime under the direction of the *magistri*.<sup>88</sup> This system still existed in the late empire, albeit in a modified form. The mid-fourth-century Regionary Catalogues record the existence of two senatorial *curatores* and forty-eight *vicomagistri* for each one of the fourteen regions of the city. Whereas previously the number of *magistri* per region depended on the number of *vici* it contained, now it was fixed at the same number for all of them. *Vicomagistri* were no longer the representatives of each neighbourhood, but rather local officials representing the city government. This explains the differences in the numbers of *vici* (seventy-eight), shrines (seventy-eight), and *vicomagistri* (forty-eight) in *Regio XIV, Transtiberim*, for example.<sup>89</sup> This system of officials scattered through the different *vici* and *regiones* ensured that the central government could reach different parts of the city and its inhabitants.

The administration of Rome retained its local basis for the whole late antique period.<sup>90</sup> Prefects kept standard weights in each region of the city, as a way of curbing irregularities in commercial transactions.<sup>91</sup> Public doctors were also appointed for different regions (although not exactly on the basis of the Augustan division),<sup>92</sup> and the Regionary Catalogues were based on administrative lists organized according to this same principle.<sup>93</sup> The Christian Church also developed a system of regions and parishes during this period, on a different basis to that of the civil administration, but with similar aims: to improve the provision of services and pastoral care to its members.<sup>94</sup> Although the Regionary Catalogues present many inconsistencies in terms of the number of *vici* in the city, they still record the names of a few of them, and sometimes the monuments from which they took their identity. It is the case of the Vicus Vittrarius, the Atrium Cyclopiis (probably in the Vicus Cyclopiis) and the Apollo Sandaliarius (probably in the Vicus Sandaliarius).<sup>95</sup> More importantly, the Regionaries are remarkably consistent in the numbers of *vici* and *aediculae* given for each region.

*Vici* and their *compita* still served as the spatial framework within which everyday life unfolded. Ammianus, when criticizing the *populus Romanus*, observed that it wasted its time gathering at squares, crossroads, and streets (*fora, compita, and plateas*) around the city.<sup>96</sup> The later account of the martyrdom of S. Aurea records that at times of persecution Romans were forced to sacrifice

<sup>88</sup> For a useful discussion of *compita*, see Lott (2004) 106–17 and Pisani Sartorio (1988).

<sup>89</sup> See Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice I*, 147 (*Curiosum*) and 183 (*Notitia*).

<sup>90</sup> As suggested by the epitaph of a *curator* of Region 3 (*Isis et Serapis*), datable to the late fifth or sixth century: *CIL VI*, 31958 = *EDR* 114205; *PLRE II*, Basiliscus.

<sup>91</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.9.10.

<sup>92</sup> See Schmidt-Hofner (2008) 327–30, and *Cod. Theod.* 13.8–10 and 13.8.12–19 for the *archiatrii*, esp. 13.3.8 for their spatial distribution.

<sup>93</sup> On the composition of the Regionary Catalogues, see Behrwald (2006).

<sup>94</sup> See the analysis of Pietri (1976) 649–59 and (1989) 1055–62.

<sup>95</sup> See Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice I*, 90, 93, and 99 (for the *Curiosum*) and 165–6, and 168 (*Notitia*). For the number of *vici*, see Coarelli (1997) 92–3.

<sup>96</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 28.4.29.

*per vicos et plateas*.<sup>97</sup> This helps us understand the involvement of officials and the spatial context for the restoration of small monuments in different parts of Rome. Until as late as the reign of Valentinian I (364–75), officials of different rank were still restoring and dedicating small, local monuments. This is the case of a monumental fountain, decorated with statues, restored by the *praepositus* Flavius Antigonus (his office is not specified).<sup>98</sup> On approximately the same date, the prefect of the *vigiles* (the watchmen) Flavius Maximus dedicated two statues, one to Valentinian and the other to Gratian, near the Circus Maximus.<sup>99</sup> The fact that the two bases were found together, in front of the Church of S. Anastasia, indicates that they came either from a public square, a *compitum* or a *platea*. Security officials were still connected to public spaces, as we can see in the dedication of a statue to the Caesar Constantine II (317–37) by an official of equestrian rank, the head of the tribune of the urban cohorts for regions X, XI, XII, and of the Forum Suarium Flavius Ursacius, probably in that forum itself.<sup>100</sup>

These dedications by different officials disappeared towards the end of the fourth century, when they were monopolized by urban prefects, following a wider trend of concentration of powers in the hands of those occupying the highest offices. This is the case of the nymphaeum restored by the urban prefect Flavius Philippus around 390, attested to by three inscriptions.<sup>101</sup> The late fifth-century urban prefect Rufius Valerius Messala dedicated a statue to the goddess Victoria, for the embellishment of that place, in the Vicus Patricius.<sup>102</sup> The most likely spot for placing a statue with its cumbersome base would be at a crossroad, a *compitum*, where such a bulky monument would have enough space so as not to block the street. These actions were echoes of a long tradition of gifts by Roman politicians to individual neighbourhoods, of which Augustus was probably the most famous example.<sup>103</sup> Rather than the city as a whole, this particular form of initiative targeted the people living and interacting in specific spaces.

*Vici* were also important as tools for social control. The evidence available suggests that, just as in the early empire, late antique Romans were registered by the city administration at a local level.<sup>104</sup> This was particularly true in the case of the distribution of bread, as we will see shortly, but it is also suggested by an edict of the prefect Tarracius Bassus (375/6) punishing shop owners for their involvement in an unspecified fraud against the public systems responsible for

<sup>97</sup> *Acta S. Aurea*, I (AASS Aug. IV, 757).

<sup>98</sup> *CIL* VI, 1179 = *EDR* 111500.

<sup>99</sup> *CIL* VI, 1180 = *LSA* 1291 (Valentinian) and *CIL* VI, 1181 = *LSA* 1292 (Gratian).

<sup>100</sup> *CIL* VI, 1156a = *LSA* 1276.

<sup>101</sup> *CIL* VI, 1728a = *EDR* 123609, *CIL* VI, 1728b = *EDR* 123611, and *CIL* VI, 31912 = *EDR* 123606 (near Via Cavour). For an inventory of clearly identifiable *aediculae*, see Pisani Sartorio (1988) 27–32.

<sup>102</sup> *CIL* VI, 1775 = 41422 = *LSA* 1471: '[ad omne]m(?) splendorem publicum in vico Patricio [simulacrum?] Victoriae [poni iussit?] et fieri et ornari procurabit'. On Messala, see *PLRE* II, Messala 4.

<sup>103</sup> Who dedicated costly statues of deities *vicatim*: Suet., *Augustus* 57.1. For benefactions in the Republican period, see Livy, 25.2.8 and 30.26.5–6, for example.

<sup>104</sup> See Tarpin (2001) 759–60.

distributing bread and providing entertainment. The edict records not only the name of the *tabernarii* punished, but also the location of their shops, indicating in some cases even their ethnic origin and religious affiliation. Various copies of the edict were found in different parts of the city, which suggests that the prefect's decision was widely disseminated.<sup>105</sup> An echo of the existence of these local lists might be found in the late antique acts of S. Sebastian, where we are told that imperial officials sought Christians in *insulae*, *vici*, and *nymphaea*, i.e. according to the spatial units in which the inhabitants of Rome were registered.<sup>106</sup>

Regions, *vici*, and their *compita* were still important elements in the definition of late antique Rome's urban space. They were the spatial framework for the administration and for social gatherings and face-to-face interaction. They were defined by the people who lived there and by their monumental decoration, as the Regionary Catalogues and the epigraphic evidence suggest.<sup>107</sup> Public officials, aristocrats, and their associates (friends and clients) exercised their power at this concrete, local level. In 365, when the house of the urban prefect Ceionius Rufius Volusianus was attacked by an angry mob, it was not the officials under his authority who saved him and his property from destruction; it was the members of his *familia* and of the households of his *vicini* that helped him.<sup>108</sup>

Aristocratic influence over the city's neighbourhoods and regions increased with the passing of time. This is indicated by a series of references in the correspondence exchanged between the urban prefect Aurelius Anicius Symmachus and the imperial court during the riots that followed the election of the successor of pope Zosimus, in 418. During these conflicts, Symmachus and the court urged individuals they identified as *maiores* and *primate regionum* to help control the factions.<sup>109</sup> Scholars have assumed that these corresponded to the *curatores* of each region,<sup>110</sup> but it is more likely that these men were powerful aristocrats who, by the beginning of the fifth century, were exercising some form of leadership in the places where they lived without holding any official position.<sup>111</sup> Building local connections, and especially the ability to influence the daily life of specific neighbourhoods, played an important role in the social strategies of the Roman aristocracy. This was true in the case of the administration of the city, and it was also the case of the working of imperial services, especially the *annona*.

<sup>105</sup> *CIL* VI, 1766 = 31894 = 41328 = *EDR* 093563 (near the Basilica Iulia in the Roman Forum), *CIL* VI, 31893 = 41329 = *EDR* 093564 (S. Pietro in Vincoli), and *CIL* VI, 10099 = 31899 = 41330 = *EDR* 093565 (Via Appia, near circus of Maxentius). See, on this inscription, G. Alföldy (2001A) 9.

<sup>106</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani*, 65 (AASS Jan. II, 275). The text is dated to the fifth or sixth century, see *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* XI, 778.

<sup>107</sup> See the useful discussion of Meneghini (2007) 212–13.

<sup>108</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.8. See Cracco Ruggini (1997) 174–8, for the importance of aristocratic local links in a Christian context. Also Lizzi Testa (2004) 67–8, for the attack against Volusianus.

<sup>109</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 14.3; 21.3; 29.5; 31.6; 32.4.

<sup>110</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 258 and Jones (1964) 694, with n. 15.

<sup>111</sup> As we know of *priores*, *maiores*, *optimates*, and *seniores* exercising social leadership in other western cities: see Liebeschuetz (2001) 124–7.

## Imperial Services and Aristocratic Power

In spite of all the power brought by the office, being an urban prefect was not an easy job. Prefects could suffer as a result of unpopular decisions, find themselves involved in usurpations, and even be caught up in conflicts between rival Christian factions.<sup>112</sup> The greatest threat to a prefect's reputation and life, however, was posed by riots in times of famine. This is a constant topic in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus, who incorporates it into his narrative of important events in the *Urbs*.<sup>113</sup> Gabinius Barbarus Pompeianus was attacked and killed by an angry mob in the city centre in February 409, as a result of the food shortage caused by the Visigothic siege of the city in late 408.<sup>114</sup> Prefects and imperial officials were thus permanently concerned with the proper functioning of the city's food supply. Symmachus urged an unidentified official, probably a prefect of the *annona*, to be patient and endure recriminations at a time of difficulties.<sup>115</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris, when urban prefect in 468, sought the friendship and support of the *praefectus annonae*, for fear of popular demonstrations in the theatre.<sup>116</sup> Conversely, being in office at times of prosperity was a source of glory and popular approval, and office holders tried to make the most of it.<sup>117</sup> Symmachus tells us that the praetorian prefect of Italy in 396, Eusebius, had planned to announce the arrival of the supply of pork during the celebration of games, but his plans were inadvertently preempted by the urban prefect Florentinus, who announced it himself, taking the limelight from Eusebius.<sup>118</sup>

Even when not occupying office, aristocrats were still involved in the provisioning of food to the Roman population. Symmachus expressed these concerns in a number of letters addressed to friends and imperial officials, and his writings offer precious glimpses into this issue. As he observed, there was a moral imperative for senators to be in Rome at times of famine.<sup>119</sup> He does not say whether this is so that members of his class would share the sufferings of the people, or because their presence could help to control the angry crowds, but one possibility does not exclude the other. Ambrose mentions an urban prefect who organized a collection of funds in the Senate to import grain in 376.<sup>120</sup> The empress Laeta, Gratian's widow, and her mother Tisamene shared their own supplies with people in need

<sup>112</sup> Unpopular decisions: Amm. Marc. 27.3.10 (Volusianus, in 365); usurpations: Zos. 2.49.1–2 (Titianus, in 351); Christian factions: Amm. Marc. 27.3.11–12 (Viventius, in 367).

<sup>113</sup> See e.g. Amm. Marc. 14.6.1 (shortage of wine) and 19.10.1 (grain). For full references, see Kohns (1961). See also Cracco Ruggini (1961) 152–76, for a list of such crises.

<sup>114</sup> *V. Mel. Gr.* 19; *V. Mel. Lat.* 34.1–3. On Pompeianus, see *PLRE* II, Pompeianus 2.

<sup>115</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 8.41. For the identification of the addressee as *praefectus annonae*, see *PLRE* I, Antiochus 7.

<sup>116</sup> Sid. Apoll., *Ep.* 1.10.

<sup>117</sup> See e.g. Amm. Marc. 21.12.24 and 26.3.6.

<sup>118</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 6.12. On Eusebius, see *PLRE* I, Eusebius 32.

<sup>119</sup> *Ep.* 1.51 (383), 4.18.3 (396), 7.70 (397?), and 7.38.2 (398).

<sup>120</sup> See Amb., *De offic.* 3.45–51.

during the Gothic siege of 408, and it is reasonable to expect that other aristocrats would also have helped their clients in times of difficulty.<sup>121</sup> Senators also intervened collectively, for example sending embassies to the court and even to the provinces, calling for official action, at the same time that well-connected individuals appealed to friends in high places.<sup>122</sup> Members of the senatorial elite were thus personally involved in the management and in the working of Rome's food supply.

### The management of Rome's food supply

Since the end of the Republican period, Rome housed by far the largest concentration of people in the Mediterranean. Keeping such a huge population fed was a tremendous challenge, which consumed the time and energy of generations of politicians, emperors, and administrators. From the end of the first century BC onwards, Roman citizens had been entitled to a monthly distribution of free grain. This did not benefit all citizens, but only those lucky enough to have been chosen by lot, approximately 200,000 people, from among a pool of adult males (non-citizens were excluded from this). During the early empire, members of this group received tickets of entitlement (*tesserae frumentariae*), which they exchanged for their monthly ration at the Porticus Minucia Frumentaria, in the Campus Martius near modern-day Largo Argentina. Roman citizens—including those entitled to the *annona*—still needed to purchase grain from the private market, but the system guaranteed stability in price and helped to alleviate food crises. The working of the *annona* was important for more than just physical survival; it also played a crucial role in the maintenance of public order.<sup>123</sup>

The supply of Rome depended on a variety of agents, including landowners, traders, imperial officials, and professional associations (called *corpora* or *collegia* in our sources). It involved different parts of the empire, including Egypt, North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The complexity and scale of the *annona* posed a series of economic, administrative, legal, and political problems.<sup>124</sup> Rome's supply system underwent important changes in the late third and early fourth century, at the same time that the status and administration of the *Urbs* were reorganized. The foundation of Constantinople diverted imperial attention—and especially

<sup>121</sup> Zos. 5.39.4. See also on this issue Brown (1992) 82–3.

<sup>122</sup> Embassies: Symm., *Ep.* 2.4; 4.18; 5.95, and *Relat.* 18.2 and 35.3. Personal requests: *Ep.* 3.55; 3.82; 4.5; 5.94 and 9.14.

<sup>123</sup> See, for the mechanics of the Roman *annona*, the work of Virlouvet (1995). On the Porticus Minucia, see Manacorda (1999).

<sup>124</sup> See Tengström (1974) and Sirks (1991); Carrié (1975) remains essential. For late antique Rome, specifically, see Lo Cascio (1999) and Panella (1999); see also Schmidt-Hofner (2008) 313–26, for the administrative reform under Valentinian.

Egyptian grain—from the old capital, making it more reliant on African imports.<sup>125</sup> The most significant transformations took place in Rome itself. The reform of the *annona* implemented in the late third and fourth century aimed at ensuring the stability of the food supply of the *Urbs*, securing the rights of those entitled to it. At the same time, it sought to increase central control over the officials and corporations involved in this complicated task. Aurelian reorganized the system at work in the city, introducing the free distribution of pork, the sale of wine (at a subsidized price), and replacing the distribution of grain with the distribution of bread.<sup>126</sup> It is not clear whether bread was distributed for free only, or whether during the late empire free bread coexisted with that sold at subsidized and market prices.<sup>127</sup> The introduction of the distribution of bread, instead of grain, led to the spatial decentralization of these operations, as it took place on ‘steps’ (*gradus*), located in different parts of the city, and no longer in a central place.<sup>128</sup>

The reorganization of the city administration also affected its supply system, consolidating a complicated division of powers between the praetorian prefect, provincial governors, and the prefect of the *annona*. The urban prefect was also involved in this administrative web, and seems to have taken the blame at times of crisis, as we saw above. Political and inter-departmental competition was constant, especially between the two main officials in Rome, the *praefectus urbi* and the *praefectus annonae*.<sup>129</sup> For most of the fourth century, prefects of the *annona* remained subordinated to the praetorian prefecture, operating primarily in Rome, Ostia, and Portus. They were responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the imperial system of food distribution, working in close cooperation with colleagues in different departments and holding administrative, judicial, and financial powers. Prefects of the *annona* controlled the *arca frumentaria*, the fund that paid for a large part of the service.<sup>130</sup>

In 365, an edict sent by Valentinian I to the urban prefect Volusianus tried to regulate the relationship between the two offices, observing that although autonomous, the prefect of the *annona* should respect the seniority of the *praefectus urbi*.<sup>131</sup> This was more than just a matter of status: another law issued soon afterwards (or possibly on the same date) insisted that officials of the urban administration should not interfere with the operations of the *annona*.<sup>132</sup> As

<sup>125</sup> On the diversion of Egyptian grain, see Durlat (1990) 43–4.

<sup>126</sup> *Chronographus a. 354* (MGH.AA 9, 148). Also Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.7 and *SHA*, Aur. 48.1. See Lo Cascio (2005) 162–5 for the broader context.

<sup>127</sup> See Vera (2002) 341–3. The coexistence of market and subsidized prices was the case with wine, for example: see *Cod. Theod.* 11.2.2–3.

<sup>128</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.2–3 (respectively from 364 and 368). See Tengström (1974) 82–3.

<sup>129</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 54–63 and Giardina (1977).

<sup>130</sup> See, on financial issues, Chastagnol (1950) 176–7.

<sup>131</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.5 (from 4 April).

<sup>132</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 11.4.1 (from 4 or 8 April): they might have been originally part of the same edict.



Christopher Kelly suggested, imperial ambiguity and hesitation in demarcating the boundaries between these offices more clearly might have been a way of fostering competition between their subordinates, making them more involved in the monitoring of their rivals and superiors.<sup>133</sup> In the case of the law of 365, the court was probably responding to petitions sent by officials of the *annona* working in Rome, whose job was being disrupted by competition between the two offices. The same issue resurfaced in 376, once more in a letter addressed to an urban prefect, showing that matters of precedence and administrative autonomy remained relevant.<sup>134</sup> The prefect, Aradius Rufinus, was probably the same one who according to Ambrose mobilized the Senate to relieve the famine that distressed the city—a good reminder of the fact that the initiatives of a more assertive official could be perceived in different ways by different people.<sup>135</sup> The competition between the two offices was probably only resolved when the *pre-fectura annonae* was finally placed under the authority of the urban prefect, most likely in the early fifth century.<sup>136</sup>

The late imperial *annona* required an unprecedented involvement of Roman aristocrats and their associates, operating in different types of spaces around the city. This new system offered to members of the Roman elite new opportunities to acquire and enhance their power, be it through economic gain or the establishment of networks of clients. The very complexity and the number of resources and personnel involved in the *annona* system offered a variety of opportunities for aristocrats to further their social and political networks. The patronage of *collegia* and their leaders was one of them.<sup>137</sup> Statue bases discovered in different parts of Rome record the dedication of honorific statues to powerful aristocrats, usually in their houses, by associations related to the city's food supply. This is the case of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, twice urban prefect (and later accused of tampering with the city's financial funds), who was honoured by different *collegia* in his house, in the vicinity of the Lateran basilica.<sup>138</sup> Another good example is that of Lucius Aradius Valerius Proculus, also prefect on two occasions, honoured as a patron with statues set up by the *corpora* involved in the production of bread and the supply of pork.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Kelly (2004) 209. <sup>134</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.7, to Aradius Rufinus.

<sup>135</sup> See Amb., *De offic.* 3.45–51 (cited above), with comments of Cracco Ruggini (1961) 116–19 and Chastagnol (1962) 197–8.

<sup>136</sup> As indicated by *Not. dig. occ.* 4.

<sup>137</sup> See, for the involvement of corporations in the *annona*, Herz (1991).

<sup>138</sup> *CIL* VI, 1739 = *LSA* 1441, *CIL* VI, 1740 = *LSA* 1442, *CIL* VI, 1741 = *LSA* 1443, *CIL* VI, 1742 = *LSA* 1444 (the latter found on the Aventine, but certainly from the same context). Two further statue bases dedicated to Orfitus were seen in the fifteenth century, but were not copied because they could not be properly read. See, on Orfitus' house, Guidobaldi (1995A). On the discovery of the bases, Stevenson (1877) 370–1.

<sup>139</sup> *CIL* VI, 1690 = *LSA* 1396, *CIL* VI, 1692 = *LSA* 1398, *CIL* VI, 1693 = *LSA* 1399. See, for the *domus* of the Valerii, pp. 248–50 below.

The best illustration of the political dividends earned for acting as patron of *corpora* is the case of Ragonius Vincentius Celsus, a *vir clarissimus* who started his career as a lawyer at the court of the urban prefect, and whose political advancement was a product of his personal and official involvement with the *annona*. During the prefecture of Symmachus, in 384, Celsus asked the *vicarius* visiting Rome to protect him against the urban prefect and the *praefectus annonae*. Celsus had taken by force a baker of the public system of bread distribution from the custody of urban officials, and feared the consequences.<sup>140</sup> He was probably involved in other cases related to associations working on this system, since his work as a lawyer at the prefect's court is praised in the dedication of a statue to him by the *mensores* (grain surveyors) from Portus and the *caudicarii* (bargees).<sup>141</sup> We should not be surprised, therefore, in finding out that Celsus was soon made *praefectus annonae*, a position in which he had a successful tenure.<sup>142</sup>

Roman aristocrats were thus able to use their influence and personal contacts to protect corporations and extend their networks of clients. There were different types of social interaction between members of the Roman aristocracy and the people involved in the *annona*. From the middle of the fourth century onwards, legislation was issued to regulate the function, selection, and actions of the official patrons of the *collegia* related to the supply of Rome.<sup>143</sup> Their main role was to act as representatives of each *collegium*, preventing abuses by officials of the urban prefecture and of the *praefectura annonae*. These patrons were usually selected from among the members of an association, but it was sometimes enough to appoint someone they trusted; in both cases, the appointment was for a fixed term.<sup>144</sup> It is not clear who these specific patrons were, what their social standing was, nor their relationship with the aristocratic patrons honoured with statues, but it is clear that these social groups kept close links. At least a few members of these associations were actually men of possessions, owners of land, who could act as their elected patrons and assume important responsibilities in the city and in the workings of the *annona*.<sup>145</sup>

The clearest example is the case of *pistores* (wealthy owners of bakeries), who could become senators and follow a traditional public career.<sup>146</sup> Ammianus tells us of a *pistor* from Rome who was made governor of *Tuscia et Umbria*, only to be later condemned and executed for fraud involving members of the corporation of

<sup>140</sup> Case described in Symm., *Relat.* 23.3.

<sup>141</sup> *CIL* VI, 1759 = *LSA* 1464.

<sup>142</sup> See *CIL* XIV, 138 = *LSA* 1650, *CIL* XIV, 139 = *LSA* 1651, *CIL* XIV, 173 = *LSA* 1653, *CIL* XIV, 4716 = *LSA* 1662, and *CIL* XIV, 4717 = *LSA* 2582. On Celsus' career, see *PLRE* I, Celsus 9, and more recently Vera (2002) 345.

<sup>143</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.3.2 (355); 11.14.1 (365); 14.3.7 (367); 14.23.1 (400); 14.4.9–10 and 14.3.22 (417).

<sup>144</sup> See also, besides the laws cited above, Waltzing (1896) 367–72. See Schmidt-Hofner (2008) 303 for a different position.

<sup>145</sup> See Tengström (1974) 35 (*navicularii Africae*) and 73 (*pistores*); Schmidt-Hofner (2008) 299–312 discusses the *munus pistorum*.

<sup>146</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.3.4.

the *navicularii* (shipmasters).<sup>147</sup> Although we cannot be certain that Terentius, the *pistor*, ever reached the rank of *clarissimus*,<sup>148</sup> the anecdote illustrates the links between a group that played a crucial role in the survival of the *Urbs* (the *pistores*), corruption, and political power. Just as in the case of the administration of the city, the imperial *annona* offered to Roman aristocrats many opportunities for securing and advertising their standing. Aristocrats were thus able to spread their social networks using the administrative and legal channels that made one of the city's most important imperial services work. The extent to which Rome's urban space was reshaped in this process becomes clearer when we consider the spaces connected to the actual working of this system: the arrival, storage, and distribution of foodstuffs.

### The spaces of the *annona*

The working of the *annona* had a direct impact on the topography of the city, offering a range of possibilities for the involvement of aristocrats in Rome's urban space and in the daily interactions that characterized it. This is illustrated by the actions of Acilius Glabrio Sibidius. Sometime in the late fourth century, Sibidius founded a small forum in the northern Campus Martius (Map 1: 13). The space was used for the celebration of the family by his son and three times urban prefect Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, who erected a group of statues in honour of his father and ancestors in the area.<sup>149</sup> However, although honour and self-display were important considerations, the decision to found a public square in this part of the city involved more than just celebrating a family's prestige. The northern Campus Martius underwent important changes from the second century AD onwards. It evolved from a zone of imperial self-display into a crowded and busy residential and commercial district (Fig. 1.2).<sup>150</sup> Both sides of the Via Lata (modern-day Via del Corso) were progressively occupied by structures with commercial function, such as *insulae* built on top of *tabernae* and porticoes. This is echoed in a number of probably fictitious passages in the *Historia Augusta*, recording the construction and planning of porticoes in this area, by different emperors.<sup>151</sup> From the reign of Aurelian onwards, there was an increasing commercial and annonarian activity in this area. The construction of the Aurelian Wall led to the reorganization of the street system connecting the Tiber wharves to the Via Lata (to the east) and the Circus Flaminius (to the south). Goods being

<sup>147</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.1–2.

<sup>148</sup> Both *virī clarissimi* and *perfectissimi* could be appointed *correctores* of a province, in some cases: Cecconi (1994) 27.

<sup>149</sup> *CIL* VI, 1678 = *LSA* 1393, *CIL* VI, 1767 = *LSA* 1466, and *CIL* VI, 37119 = 41389a = *LSA* 1577. This forum will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>150</sup> Although the evidence is scattered, the direction of the changes seems clear: see Rakob (1987) and De Caprariis (1999).

<sup>151</sup> *SHA*, *Alex. Sev.* 26.7; *Gord.* 32.6–7; *Gall.* 18.5. See De Caprariis (1999) 223–5.

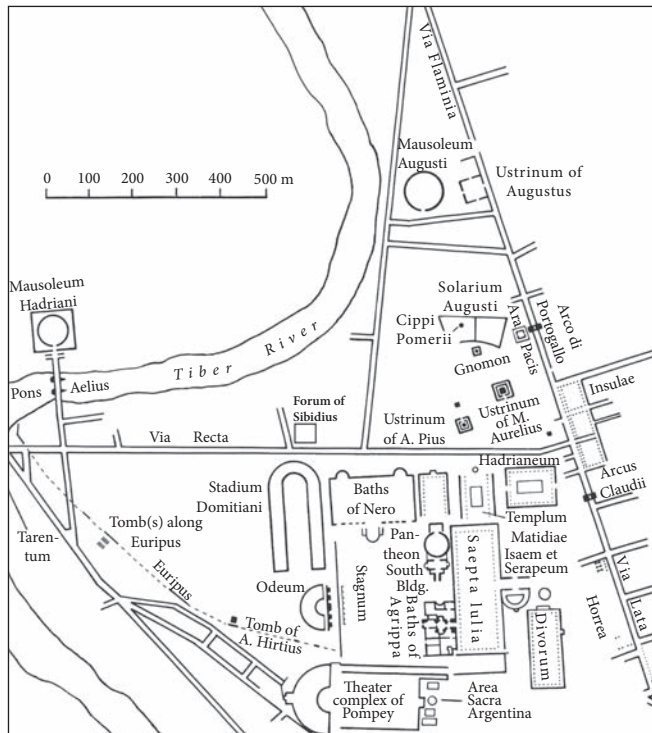


Fig. 1.2. The Forum of Sibidius in the Northern Campus Martius.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from M. T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome*, Princeton 1987, fig. 1, republished with permission of Princeton University Press; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

brought from central and northern Italy entered the city through this area, as indicated by the presence of three small gates (*posterulae*) in this stretch of the wall, next to the remains of three docks, attesting to the importance of the northern Campus Martius for the economic life of the city.<sup>152</sup> The construction of the Temple of the Sun near the Via Lata, and the use of this structure for the storage and sale of fiscal wine, must have further increased the flow of people and goods in this area. This is confirmed by a late antique inscription recording the regulation of payments to be made in relation to the *annona*, which refers to the personnel in charge of transporting wine from the *Ciconiae*, the docks where the wine was unloaded from the ships, to the Aurelian Temple of the Sun.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> See, on the changes in the street system, Dey (2011) 185–95. More generally, see De Caprariis (1999) 220–1. This area was already busy at the time of Augustus; see Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.9.

<sup>153</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 324 and De Caprariis (1999) 225. For the inscription, see *CIL* VI, 1785 = *EDR* 111565: ‘... falancariis qui de Ciconiis ad templum cupas referre consueverunt ...’. For the arrival of goods in this part of the city, see Ps.-Aeth., *Cosmog.* (ed. Riese, p. 83).

It is possible that the nearby Monte Citorio, an artificial hill called Mons Acceptorius in the Middle Ages, was formed by the disposal of ceramic material gathered by the corporation of the *acceptores* (dock workers), a possibility that would reinforce the idea that this was a very busy part of the Campus Martius.<sup>154</sup> A *forum* in this area, connected to the street system that served Rome's wine supply,<sup>155</sup> could serve as a focal point for social and economic activities in the presence of the statues of the Anician family. *Fora* were, primarily, arenas for social interaction, spaces where people of different origins and social standing met on a day-to-day basis. The specific function of the forum of Sibidius, if it ever had one, remains unknown. However, its topographic connection to the economic activities that characterized this part of the Campus Martius in late antiquity are too strong to be a mere coincidence.

### Small fora and the supply of pork

It was the very complexity of the imperial system of food supply that allowed Roman aristocrats to use their official positions to further their social power and personal connections. Different parts of the city were involved in this process, as we can see in the case of the supply of pork. In a law addressed to the urban prefect Flavianus in 400, the emperors Arcadius and Honorius determined that the fines imposed on those who had extorted money from the *corpus naviculariorum* should be reverted to this same association, and that in the future officials committing this crime would have to pay back four times the amount plundered.<sup>156</sup> The *navicularii* (shipmasters) were a powerful association, and it is likely that the law was a response to a petition from this group, asking for protection against abuses committed by officials in the urban prefecture.<sup>157</sup> The law was posted in a public space, the Forum Aproniani, probably an area where shipmasters and urban officials frequently interacted.

The location of the Forum Aproniani, a space also mentioned in the fifth-century description of the city by Polemius Silvius, remains unknown.<sup>158</sup> Its name suggests that it was founded by a member of the family of the Aproniani, most likely Lucius Turcius Apronianus, urban prefect in 362–4. During his term as prefect, Apronianus had shown great interest in the city's food supply, an attitude that earned him a good reputation.<sup>159</sup> He was the recipient of an edict in 362, which regulated the activities of officials of the urban prefecture and of members

<sup>154</sup> De Caprariis (1999) 231.

<sup>155</sup> As revealed by the excavations of 1904: Gatti (1904) 401.

<sup>156</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 13.5.29.

<sup>157</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 13.5.30–1. See also Tengström (1974) 35–43.

<sup>158</sup> Polemius Silvius: Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice* I, 309. For this discussion, see also Palmer (1990) 45–52 and esp. Bauer (1997) 30–7.

<sup>159</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 26.3.6; also *PLRE* I, Apronianus 10.

of the *corpus suariorum*, the association responsible for Rome's supply of pork.<sup>160</sup> The law defined how much should be paid to the *suarii* for their work, and how much could be demanded as a contribution from the inhabitants of Campania, one of the provinces responsible for supplying Rome's market. Exactions were to be collected by representatives of the provincial governor in collaboration with the local municipal councils, and should not exceed the price paid for pork locally—instead of the inflated sums charged in Rome. The law aimed at ensuring fair treatment for local communities providing foodstuffs for the *annona*, but it also illustrates how prefectural officers and members of the *corpus* could extort money from tax payers.

The Aproniani already had strong connections with Italian city councils, as Lucius Turcius Apronianus had been *corrector* (governor) of *Tuscia et Umbria* in 346. During this period, he earned the gratitude of the city councils of Spoleto and Luca, who honoured him with bronze statues set up in his house for his virtues, merit, and sense of justice.<sup>161</sup> As prefect, Apronianus issued an edict—publicized in copies around the city—regulating payments to the *suarii* and to the officials dealing with them; another edict did the same for the agents involved in the supply of beef.<sup>162</sup> His father had also been a provincial governor, before being appointed urban prefect. He held office at the province of *Lucania et Bruttium*, where he was involved in the establishment of property rights in the countryside, securing the interests of members of local councils and landowners.<sup>163</sup> The continued involvement of members of one same family with specific communities and social groups was a common feature of patron-client relations in the late antique period,<sup>164</sup> and the Aproniani are a good case in point. The posting of a law dealing with the *annona* in a forum associated with the family is a striking indication of the intimate links established between certain senatorial households and various agents in Italy through this crucial imperial service.

The case of Apronianus reminds us, furthermore, of the importance of holding public positions for strengthening the social networks of individuals or families. This was a fundamental aspect of the functioning of the late Roman state, as John Matthews observed,<sup>165</sup> and it can be explored in more detail when we consider the main setting for the operation of Rome's supply of pork, the Forum Suarium, and the official responsible for it, the *tribunus Fori Suarii*. The Forum Suarium was located in Region VII, Via Lata, near Aurelian's Temple of the Sun and the

<sup>160</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.4.3, with discussion in Lo Cascio (1999) 173–7. See, for Rome's pork supply, Chastagnol (1953) and (1960) 325–30; see also Barnish (1987).

<sup>161</sup> *CIL* VI, 1768 = *LSA* 1467 (Spoleto) and *CIL* VI, 1769 = *LSA* 1468 (Luca).

<sup>162</sup> *CIL* VI, 1771 = *EDR* 111544; see also G. Alföldy (2001A) 9. *CIL* VI, 1770 = *EDR* 111542 deals with the supply of beef.

<sup>163</sup> *CIL* X, 407; also *PLRE* I, Apronianus 9.

<sup>164</sup> See discussion in Chausson (2004), who also considered earlier cases.

<sup>165</sup> Matthews (1990) 17.

headquarters of the urban cohorts (see Map 1).<sup>166</sup> Inscriptions datable to the second and third centuries attest to the presence of different types of traders in this forum, and the edict of Apronianus regulating the activities of the *suarii*, mentioned above, refers to two types of members of this association that probably also worked in this area: those operating the system of collection and distribution of pork and those overseeing it.<sup>167</sup> The importance of this space for the public system of pork distribution and the operations of the *suarii* was acknowledged in a law addressed to Praetextatus (prefect in 367) that defined payments to be made to members of this association and to pig farmers, in which the prefect was instructed to have these regulations incised in bronze tablets and put on display in the Forum Suarium.<sup>168</sup>

It was probably in this same place that Flavius Ursacius, tribune of the urban cohorts and of the Forum Suarium, dedicated a statue to the Caesar Constantine II in the early fourth century.<sup>169</sup> The fact that the same official was responsible for controlling this area and the garrisons policing Rome indicates how important this forum was. The combination of military and administrative powers helped to make tribunes prominent figures in city life. This explains why Maxentius sought the support of a *tribunus Fori Suarii* when preparing his usurpation in 306.<sup>170</sup> Tribunes were directly subordinated to the urban prefect, and not to the prefect of the *annona*.<sup>171</sup> They are attested, for the beginning of the fourth century, as being of equestrian rank,<sup>172</sup> but the power and prestige of this office made it very attractive to ambitious Romans. Symmachus, when prefect of the *Urbs* in 384, addressed a letter to the court asking for guidance on how to proceed when a tribune appointed by the court insisted on taking office immediately, in spite of the refusal of the (then current) office-holder to resign before the end of his legal term.<sup>173</sup> Decades later, another Symmachus—urban prefect in 418–20—sought the assistance of a tribune, Serenianus, when dealing with a riotous Christian crowd near the Basilica of S. Paul on the Via Ostiensis.<sup>174</sup> Serenianus was a *vir clarissimus*, a member of the senatorial order, indicating that this office had been

<sup>166</sup> The location of the forum is recorded in the Regionary Catalogues, and it is frequently associated with the *templum Solis*; see Chioffi (1995A).

<sup>167</sup> For the inscriptions: *CIL* VI, 3728 = *EDR* 157670 ('actores de foro Suario') and *CIL* VI, 9631 = *EDR* 167178 ('mercator de foro Suario'). Apronianus' edict (*CIL* VI, 1771 = *EDR* 111544) mentions those 'qui suariam faciunt' (l. 11) and 'qui suariam recognoscunt' (ll. 17–18), but does not specify where they work.

<sup>168</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.4.4: 'Haec autem omnia aeneae tabulae in foro Suario collocandae ad aeternam memoriam oportebi insculpi'.

<sup>169</sup> *CIL* VI, 1156a = *LSA* 1276 (datable to 317–37). The base was found re-used in the Roman Forum. See Chastagnol (1960) 254–6 for the tribune's power of police.

<sup>170</sup> *Zos.* 2.9.3.

<sup>171</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 225–7 for the relationship between tribunes and urban prefects. This is confirmed for the fifth century in *Not. dig. occ.* 4.

<sup>172</sup> See Chastagnol (1960) 225 and *PLRE* I, Ursacius 4.

<sup>173</sup> Symm., *Rel.* 22.

<sup>174</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 16 (from 419). For Serenianus' identification, see Chastagnol (1960) 173 and *PLRE* II, Serenianus.

captured by members of the aristocracy by this date. As the examples of the associations, spaces, and officials connected with the distribution of pork show, even services that were carefully regulated by the imperial court could provide aristocrats and their associates with opportunities to enhance their influence and prestige in the life of the *Urbs*. It is possible, in fact, that the Forum Aproniani was an alternative name for the Forum Suarium, a space dedicated to a service with which the family maintained intimate links during the fourth century.

### Granaries, steps, and the distribution of bread

The association between personal power, office-holding, and the spaces of the city can be seen more clearly when we consider the management of *horrea* (storehouses and warehouses) and *gradus* (the steps used for the distribution of bread), and the growing involvement of aristocrats in this issue. *Horrea* were structures of fundamental importance for the functioning and survival of ancient cities, and this was particularly true in the case of Rome.<sup>175</sup> The fourth-century author of the *Historia Augusta* praised Alexander Severus, his ideal ruler, for having built warehouses in every region of the city, suggesting that this was one of the marks of a good emperor.<sup>176</sup> In North Africa, the governor of Numidia (364/367) claimed to be acting 'for the safety of the Roman people', in an inscription celebrating the dedication of *horrea* connected to the supply of Rome.<sup>177</sup>

There were different types of storehouses in late antique Rome. The *Notitia urbis Romae*, for example, mentions a *Horrea Chartaria*, a paper warehouse, in Region IV (Templum Pacis).<sup>178</sup> The early imperial period was marked by the progressive incorporation of the most important warehouses into the imperial patrimony, but private *horrea* are attested to until at least the early sixth century.<sup>179</sup> The Regionary Catalogues record 290 storehouses throughout the city, probably of all types, with the greatest concentrations in Regions X (*Palatium*, 48) and XIII (*Aventinus*, 35). Although the accuracy of these numbers is debatable, it is clear that *horrea* were a fairly common feature of Rome's landscape.<sup>180</sup> As we know from literary references and archaeological finds, the most important of these structures were located to the south of the Aventine Hill (in the Testaccio area), and in Trastevere.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>175</sup> See Rickman (1971).

<sup>176</sup> *SHA*, Alex. Sev. 39.3–4. See, for this emperor, Rickman (1971) 194–5 and esp. Coarelli (1987) 445–6.

<sup>177</sup> *ILS* 5910; see *PLRE* I, Albinus 8.

<sup>178</sup> Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice* I, 168 n. 3, connects it to the *Apollo Sandaliarius*, a *vicus* famous for its booksellers.

<sup>179</sup> See Rickman (1971) 163–72; also *CIL* VI, 9464, for the epitaph of a *horrearius* working for the *vir illustris* Festus, in 513.

<sup>180</sup> The *Notitia* of Constantinople, for example, records only five storehouses (*Not. Const.*, p. 242). Note that the total of *horrea* given for each region of Rome is actually 317 for the *Curiosum* and 338 for the *Notitia*. For a discussion of the character and reliability of the Catalogues, see Arce (1999).

<sup>181</sup> Rickman (1971) 4–5. See also *LTUR* III (1996), s.v. '*horrea*'.



There is still great need for a proper study of the physical history of Roman *horrea* in late antiquity. The archaeological evidence is scattered through different publications, and it has never been as thoroughly studied as for earlier periods.<sup>182</sup> However, there is a great deal that can be learned from references in laws and other texts, especially in the case of granaries.<sup>183</sup> Imperial legislation consistently tried to control access to these structures, especially in the case of *pistores* and the bread industry.<sup>184</sup> *Pistores* were directly interested in acquiring grain, and it is natural that their presence in these spaces should raise administrative concerns. *Annona* officials were instructed to stop fraud, not only in terms of preventing the illegitimate appropriation of grain, but also of the mixing of different qualities.<sup>185</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the activities of personnel responsible for these structures had to be carefully supervised by different officials, depending on where they were based. In the case of Portus, the general supervision of *horrea* fell under the jurisdiction of the praetorian prefect, at least from the early fifth century onwards.<sup>186</sup> The situation was more complex in Rome, however, where a law of 397 determined that *praepositi horreorum* (officials in charge of the granaries) had to send their accounts to both the *vicarius urbis* and the *praefectus annonae*, placing them under two different authorities.<sup>187</sup> The *Notitia dignitatum* mentions a *curator horreorum Galbanorum* as subordinated to the urban prefect, confirming that prefects also had some degree of responsibility over the administration of storehouses in Rome.<sup>188</sup>

The dishonesty of *praepositi* and *pistores* was not the only threat to the management of granaries. Ammianus records the story of the proconsul of Africa, Iulius Festus Hymetius, in office between 366 and 368, who was accused of fraud against the imperial *annona*. Hymetius sold to the people of Carthage grain that was kept in storehouses belonging to the fisc and which was destined for the city of Rome, at a time of famine.<sup>189</sup> Although the use of public grain to alleviate popular suffering might seem a commendable policy to us, it still represented the political appropriation of imperial resources. It is not a coincidence, in this respect, that Hymetius was later honoured by the provincials of Africa with two gilt statues, one in Rome and the other in Carthage.<sup>190</sup> In a letter sent to his good friend Nicomachus Flavianus in 385–6, Symmachus accused the urban prefect Pinianus of colluding with speculators in the grain market, threatening the city with

<sup>182</sup> For a notable exception, see Astolfi, Guidobaldi, and Pronti (1978).

<sup>183</sup> A useful starting point is Vera (2008).

<sup>184</sup> e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 14.3.16 (380) and 11.14.2 (396), both addressed to urban prefects.

<sup>185</sup> See *Cod. Theod.* 11.14.1 (365, to the urban prefect), 12.6.16 (375, to the proconsul of Africa), and 14.4.9 (417, to the praetorian prefect of Italy), dealing with frauds in Portus.

<sup>186</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.23.1 (400) and 14.4.9 (417).

<sup>187</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.24.

<sup>188</sup> *Not. dig. occ.* 4.15. The involvement of urban prefects is also suggested by Symm., *Ep.* 9.124, possibly addressed to an urban prefect in 396: see Roda (1981) 278–9. For the *horrea Galbana*, see Coarelli (1996A).

<sup>189</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.17–18.

<sup>190</sup> *CIL* VI, 1736 = *LSA* 1439 (mentioning both statues). For Hymetius' career, see *PLRE* I, Hymetius.

starvation.<sup>191</sup> Just as Hymetius had sold grain for a subsidized price to favour provincials, Roman officials could manipulate the city's supply, making profit from it.

The evidence available suggests that, as with many public structures in late antique cities, *horrea* were progressively taken over by powerful and wealthy individuals, in a process that can be described as the privatization of public spaces and of the activities that took place in them. This is suggested by legislation from the time of Constantine onwards, especially by edicts demanding that private structures attached to warehouses be demolished.<sup>192</sup> We find the earliest explicit mention of fiscal *horrea* in Rome and Portus taken over for private use in a law addressed to the urban prefect L. Aurelius Avianius Symmachus, in 364.<sup>193</sup> The law determined that these structures be restored to public use, and also expressed concern with information about the private appropriation of grain destined for these buildings, showing that the whole system of the *annona* was being abused. The same type of concern was expressed some thirty years later, in an edict addressed to the praetorian prefect Flavius Mallius Theodorus.<sup>194</sup> Individuals were still taking public grain from fiscal *horrea* illegally, showing that storehouses and their content were not safe. As this law also noted, not even the water that supplied the mills used by bread makers was free from private interests.<sup>195</sup> The fact that this time the court decided not to address the edict to the urban prefect suggests that Roman officials might have been regarded as suspicious by the court. As we will see in Chapter 2, the office of the urban prefecture was involved in the spoliation of public monuments, and the court was aware of this fact.<sup>196</sup>

The attitude of central authorities changed considerably with the passing of time. In contrast with the fourth-century insistence in controlling these structures, a letter sent by the Ostrogothic king Theoderic to the urban prefect Argolicus, in the early sixth century, informed the latter that permission was granted to the *vir illustris* and patrician Paulinus to take over *horrea* that had decayed over the years, to renovate them and to leave them to his descendants.<sup>197</sup> There are a few possible explanations for this decision. The population of Rome was not as large as it had been in the fourth century, and the *annona* had become a much smaller operation. The need for such structures was certainly not the same, and the letter states that they should only be privatized if there was no public use for them anymore. And yet, the decision of the court and the request of the patrician Paulinus were part of

<sup>191</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 2.55; see comments of Cecconi (2002) 333–4, who identifies the prefect as Valerius Pinianus; for a different identification, see Liverani (2003).

<sup>192</sup> e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.4 (326, to Felix, a possible Vicar: *PLRE* I, Felix 2); see also *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.38 (398, to a praetorian prefect of the East).

<sup>193</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.12: 'horrea fiscalia... in usus translata privatos'.

<sup>194</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.15.4 (398).

<sup>195</sup> We will return to this issue in Chapter 7.

<sup>196</sup> See *Cod. Theod.* 14.23.1 (400) and 14.4.9 (417), also addressed to praetorian prefects, putting the *horrea* of Portus under their control. For the involvement of the urban prefecture in spoliation, see Maj., *Nov.* 4.1.

<sup>197</sup> Cass., *Var.* 3.29 (510/511); Cristina La Rocca and Yuri Marano, in Giardina (2014) 254–5.

a process that had started centuries earlier: the growing involvement of aristocrats in the management and preservation of these structures.<sup>198</sup>

As the problem of managing and maintaining *horrea* shows, the food supply of Rome was not simply an abstract right of certain citizens. It required specific buildings, managed by real people, subject to social and political pressure. This was particularly true in the case of the selling and distribution of benefits, be it bread, oil, pork, or wine. There were 2,300 location points for the free distribution of olive oil (*mensae oleariae*) in late antiquity and, as mentioned above, the distribution of bread took place on structures referred to as *gradus* (steps) in our sources.<sup>199</sup> A law addressed by Constantine to the *praefectus annonae* in 328 regulated the sale and transmission of *mensae oleariae*, suggesting that whilst they were privately owned they remained under the supervision of that official. It is not certain that the same was true for other structures used for the distribution of food, but it seems clear that bakeries (to which *gradus* were connected) were also either public or private, sometimes owned by aristocrats.<sup>200</sup>

The case of *gradus* is particularly important, not only because it involved the distribution of such a basic staple (bread), but also because of their dissemination in the city-space. Rather than being part of the urban administration, they were run by the *pistores* themselves, with the assistance (and supervision) of *scribae* (clerks).<sup>201</sup> Although the *corpus* of *pistores* was responsible for taking the grain from the granaries, supervising the administration of the bakeries, and finally distributing and selling the bread, it was not directly involved in the actual bread-making. This was left to contractors, *conductores* and *mancipes*, employing slaves, usually criminals sentenced to work in despairing conditions.<sup>202</sup> In other words, the distribution of bread (whether for free or not), already a complex operation in itself, was further complicated by the combination of private and public agents. The fact that officials of the urban prefecture tried to interfere and extort money from the people and associations involved in it did not make it any easier.<sup>203</sup>

It is impossible to know how many *gradus* existed in late antique Rome. Although the Regionary Catalogues record the number of *pistrina* (bakeries) for each region, we do not know the numerical *ratio* between these two types of structure. However, as Elio Cascio suggested, it seems reasonable to assume that there was a connection between the spatial distribution of 'steps' and the *vici*.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>198</sup> See Dubouloz (2006).

<sup>199</sup> *Mensae oleariae*: Chastagnol (1960) 321–2. For *gradus*: *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.2 (364); 14.17.3 (368); 14.17.5 (369); also Chastagnol (1960) 312–16 and Tengström (1974) 82–4.

<sup>200</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.24.1 (*mensae oleariae*). *Lib. Pont.* I, 222 mentions a *pistrinum* owned by an aristocrat; the banality of the reference suggests this was usual. See also Ceparano (1998).

<sup>201</sup> *Pistores*: *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.3 (368). *Scribae*: 14.17.6 (370).

<sup>202</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.3 on *pistores* and *conductores*. See also Socrat., *HE* 5.18 on contractors and the horrible conditions of work in *pistrinae*. On the slaves, see also *Cod. Theod.* 9.40.3 (319) and 9.40.5–7 (from 364).

<sup>203</sup> See *Cod. Theod.* 11.14.1 (365) and 14.3.22 (417).

<sup>204</sup> Suggested by Lo Cascio (1998) 376. Also Tarpin (2001) 754–5.

The names of the people entitled to benefits were registered in bronze tables, affixed at each *gradus*.<sup>205</sup> These lists were controlled by the scribes that attended the distributions, and their aim was to prevent irregularities in the working of the *annona* by tying recipients to specific places.<sup>206</sup> In fact, Roman citizens were explicitly forbidden to move from one *gradus* to the other, probably because this would have made the management of the system even more complicated.<sup>207</sup> The easiest way to implement a system with so many recipients and distribution points around town would be to base these lists on the *census* of the population, also conducted on a local basis.<sup>208</sup> In practice, the working of the *annona* in Rome was connected to the same administrative and political set of principles that helped to ensure aristocratic dominance in the regions and *vici* where they lived, examined above.

The importance of *annona* officials was further enhanced by the practical limitations of this system. It is usually assumed that the total number of beneficiaries in late antique Rome was 200,000 people in the fourth century, and that it declined later.<sup>209</sup> Even if we accept such a large number, it is certain that a considerable part of the population was left out of the *annona*. Furthermore, as Ambrose mentions, even those entitled to distributions experienced difficulties in securing enough food at times of crisis.<sup>210</sup> As a result, there was considerable economic and social pressure on the *populus Romanus* itself—not to mention those who were excluded from this category. It is in this context that we should understand the imperial concern with the possibility of frauds in distributions. Entitlement to the *annona* was a social and political privilege, and people relied on their patrons and connections to be included among the recipients.

The imperial administration tried to control who received the benefits of the *annona*, excluding from it different segments of late Roman society, from slaves to the poorest in the city, from senators and their dependents to people with infamous jobs and foreigners.<sup>211</sup> And yet, the manipulation of lists of recipients and the inclusion of those who were not entitled to distributions seems to have been common practice. This is suggested by a law dated to 370, addressed to the prefect of the *annona* Maximinus:

If any overseer, procurator, or slave of a senator should ever obtain step bread through usurpation, through the favouritism, venality, or even the consent of a scribe, he shall be subjected to questioning with torture. If it should appear that any such offender by his own rash lawlessness and without the knowledge of his master had made an illicit agreement as to his receipt of bread, he shall be placed

<sup>205</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.5 (369); see also Chastagnol (1960) 315.

<sup>206</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.6 (370).

<sup>208</sup> Lo Cascio (1997) 53–4.

<sup>207</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.2 (364).

<sup>209</sup> Durliat (1990) 58; Lo Cascio (1998) 376.

<sup>210</sup> Ambr., *De offic.* 2.64.

<sup>211</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.5–6 (369 and 370, respectively); 14.4.10 (417), for pork. See also Durliat (1990) 57.

in chains and shall himself serve the bakery that he defrauded. But if it should be established that the fault was that of a senator, his house shall be added to the resources of the fisc.<sup>212</sup>

Maximinus, the recipient of the law, was at this time involved in a persecution against members of senatorial families accused of practising sorcery, as we saw above. By instructing him to investigate and fight abuses committed against the system for distributing bread, granting him the power to torture the slaves and confiscate the properties of aristocrats, emperors were consciously adding pressure and increasing their hold over the Roman elite. Just as the accusation of dealing with magical art, senatorial (but not only) tampering with the running of the *annona* at the *gradus* was a serious offence. It involved the irregular distribution of a scarce resource (free or subsidized bread), as well as the manipulation of an imperial service of crucial importance for the maintenance of the *Urbs*. As legislation collected in the *Theodosian Code* shows, high imperial officials tried to distribute the benefits of the *annona* system, even when they did not have the authority for it.<sup>213</sup> An edict addressed to the urban prefect Symmachus (the elder) in 364 best illustrates the practice that concerned the central authorities so much. The prefect was told that whenever a privilege was requested to someone, be it based on the claim of antiquity or as a favour, he should not consent to it without imperial approval.<sup>214</sup>

It was in the many *gradus* scattered all over the city that these social interactions were made real. The crowds who flocked to these occasions witnessed the weaving of the many social relations that constituted Rome's social fabric.<sup>215</sup> Bread distributions took place on the *gradus*, never in the bakeries themselves; they were conducted by the bakers, overseen by the *scribae* who controlled the lists of recipients. Most importantly, distributions had to be carried out in public, visible to all.<sup>216</sup> Visibility was a form of preventing irregularities, but we should not forget that it was also a form of celebrating the participation of *pistores* and their patrons in the imperial service. For a group that, as discussed above, had intimate links with the senatorial aristocracy, this was an important tool for social advancement and self-display. For members of the Roman elite, *gradus* were the places to which their social networks and economic resources converged; they were the stage—or

<sup>212</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.6 (transl. Pharr, with modifications): 'Si quis umquam actor procurator servusve senatoris usurpatum gradilem, gratificante aut vendente scriba vel etiam consentiente, percepit, subiciatur eculi quaestioni. Ac si eundem patuerit temeritate propria adque ignorante domino de perceptione panis illicite transegisse, ipse sub vinculis pistrino quod fraudabat inserviat; si vero senatoris culpa id fuisse constiterit, domus eius fisci viribus adgregetur.' The possibility of fraud is also suggested by *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.2 (364).

<sup>213</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.5.5–7, addressed to praetorian prefects between 355–7.

<sup>214</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.4 (364).

<sup>215</sup> Prud., *C. Symm.* 1.578–86 refers to the crowds fed with bread distributed at the steps.

<sup>216</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.3–4.

stages, scattered throughout the city—where their power was paraded before the eyes of Roman citizens.

### **Conclusion: Administration, Space, and Aristocratic Power**

Taking part in the operation of the *annona* was a form of acquiring and displaying social power and influence. As the evidence discussed in this chapter shows, the reorganization of Rome's food supply, as well as the reform of the administration of the city, had important consequences for the life of its inhabitants. These changes offered new positions of power to be occupied, at the same time that the urban prefect assumed the role of central mediator between the court and its old capital. The management of the city and its services was never completely free from supervision and interference by imperial officials, but Roman aristocrats and their associates were able to accommodate their own interests within this reformed system. This was done through patronage, favouritism, and corruption. The rewards for these practices included political influence, social status, and economic profit.

These changes had powerful consequences for the way in which urban space was reshaped in late antiquity. Not only did the map of the city change, with the development of new administrative centres, but also the way in which social and political power were exercised in space. Rather than lacking a centre, late antique Rome's political map was defined by different central spaces: by the imperial residences, the episcopal see, but most importantly by the spaces of the urban prefecture. The city's political map was defined according to a specifically late antique hierarchy of spaces, one that had the prefect and his officials at the top. Parallel to this topographical redefinition, the preservation of regions and *vici* allowed aristocrats and their supporters to extend their influence at a 'micro' level. The different spatial frameworks in which aristocratic power operated in late antique Rome were the same in which everyday life unfolded. It was the ability of late antique aristocrats to take advantage of this spatial and administrative reorganization that had the greatest impact on city life.

This process also affected the very definition of the Roman aristocracy. Only a minority of its members was ever appointed to the highest office in the city. For many of those who were not so lucky, a post in one of the lower offices in the prefecture was as close as they would reach to the top of Rome's political life—even if their careers might lead them to success elsewhere (in a provincial government or in the central administration). The disappearance of lower officials from the epigraphic record and the dominance of prefects is a clear indication of the hierarchic character of the late imperial elite. Alternative forms of exercising power and influence were opened to these men (and probably women too), however. As the various elements involved in the management of the *annona*

show, personal contacts and a wide social network put aristocrats in a position to influence even a service as carefully regulated as the imperial system of food distributions. The nature of the evidence available makes it impossible for us to see how this system evolved in the fifth century, but it seems likely that powerful local leaders came to exercise increasing power, as public structures like warehouses were progressively taken over by private interests.

## Building Late Antique Rome

At the beginning of the sixth century, Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus *iunior* was one of the most powerful men in Rome. His personal connections and status were almost incomparable in western Roman society. Symmachus was heir to an ancient and prestigious family and his daughter was married to Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, a member of the important family of the Anicii. He was a major player in Ostrogothic political life, having occupied the urban prefecture and the consulship. His influence spread across all aspects of life in the city, from the administration of justice to ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Symmachus' authority and power were widely acknowledged, so much that the Ostrogothic king Theoderic asked him, in a letter written by Cassiodorus and preserved in his *Variae*, to restore the magnificent Theatre of Pompey, one of the most famous monuments in the Campus Martius.<sup>2</sup> The letter is a striking illustration of the degree to which Roman aristocrats were involved in the fate of the city's urban fabric. Theoderic praised the Roman senator for the wealth of his private buildings, which were of such beauty that they added to the wonders of the city. The senator's properties qualified him as a suitable restorer of the theatre, on which his ancestors had already carried out work.<sup>3</sup> Although Symmachus was not expected to pay for this enterprise himself, it would add as much to his reputation as to that of Theoderic: 'whether it should be held by fitted pillars [?supported by buttresses] or whether such a building might be renewed through rebuilding, we have taken care to provide from our treasury for your expenses, in order that you might gain prestige from such a good work and that antiquity is fittingly renewed in our times'.<sup>4</sup>

The preservation of Rome's monuments was a constant concern of the Ostrogothic king, just as it had been for Roman emperors before him.<sup>5</sup> However, rulers could not always count on the cooperation of the senatorial aristocracy. In 458, for

<sup>1</sup> See *PLRE* II, Symmachus 9, for Symmachus' life and career. For his involvement in city life, see e.g. Cass., *Var.* 2.14 (trial of a parricide) and 4.22 (trial of senators). Symmachus was involved in the Laurentian schism of 498: Avit., *Ep.* 34. On Symmachus and the Anicii, see Bjornlie (2013) 134–8.

<sup>2</sup> Cass., *Var.* 4.51. See, on this letter, C. La Rocca and Y. Marano, in Giardina (2014) 394–9.

<sup>3</sup> *Var.* 4.51.3. It is not clear to which of Symmachus' ancestors the letter refers to.

<sup>4</sup> *Var.* 4.51.12: 'sive masculis pilis contineri sive talis fabrica refectionis studio potuerit innovari, expensas vobis de nostro cubiculo curavimus destinare, ut et vobis adquiratur tam bonis opera fama et nostris temporibus videatur antiquitas decentius innovata.'

<sup>5</sup> See Fauvinet-Ranson (2006A). For Theoderic's building programme, see Johnson (1988) and esp. M. C. La Rocca (1993).



example, the emperor Majorian addressed an edict to the urban prefect Aemilianus accusing his officials of being involved in the spoliation of public buildings, ‘in which the adornment of the whole city of Rome consists’.<sup>6</sup> As the emperor insisted, old temples and monuments, whether founded by the ‘ancients’ for public utility or pleasure, should not be destroyed by anyone, under any circumstances. The *novella* of Majorian points to a darker aspect of the practice highlighted in Theoderic’s letter. Just as they helped to restore the buildings of ancient Rome, aristocrats were also involved in their destruction.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the role played by members of the Roman aristocracy in the profound physical transformations that redefined the city of Rome in late antiquity. Throughout this period, vast resources were poured into new building works and restorations in the former imperial capital, while at the same time monuments fell into ruins and parts of the city were progressively abandoned.<sup>7</sup> As I will argue below, operating amidst imperial commissions and ecclesiastical policies, Roman senators invested in and interacted with the urban fabric in a very fundamental way, using it to display, exercise, and increase their power. In order to do this, it is necessary in the first place to analyse the role played by members of this social group in the building works carried out during this period, be it as urban prefects or as private patrons. I will then consider the ideological motivations for building in late antique Rome, considering why aristocrats became involved in this type of activity, and how they justified this involvement. Finally, I will examine their involvement in the practical issues related to building works, including funding, securing building material, and organizing the required workforce.

## Emperors, Aristocrats, and Public Building

Studies of late antique Rome frequently emphasize the role played by the court in the embellishment and preservation of the spaces of the city.<sup>8</sup> However, the identification between Rome and its rulers did not exclude other agents from contributing to the aggrandizement of the *Urbs*. The Senate, corporations, and private donors who built public structures and dedicated monuments there did not (and could not) compete with the imperial court. And yet, they took an active part in the building of imperial Rome, adding nuances and making the association of the ruler with his capital a complex process. Far from being mere followers of

<sup>6</sup> Maj., Nov. 4.1: ‘in quibus omnis Romanae civitatis consistit ornatus’. This *novella* is discussed in Oppedisano (2013) 148–56.

<sup>7</sup> As discussed in the Introduction. See, for the state of different parts of the city in the fifth century, the articles collected in Lipps, Machado, and von Rummel (2013). For destruction and spoliation, see Pensabene (2015).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Krautheimer (1980); also Lançon (1995).

imperial ideology and court instructions, different builders used these occasions as opportunities to express and emphasize their own values, whilst at the same time praising the ruling power. The dedication of imperial monuments by members of local elites, which took place all over the empire, was part of a panegyric culture, and can be clearly seen in both early and late imperial Rome.<sup>9</sup>

Imperial monuments were the product of a dialogue between different agents, expressing what could at times be turbulent interactions. The triumphal arch dedicated by the Senate to the emperor Constantine in 315 is a good illustration of this dynamic, commemorating the victory of an invading force against an emperor (Maxentius) who had until recently ruled the *Urbs* with the support of a reasonable part of its elite. Rather than an overblown celebration of the ever-conquering ruler, the imagery on display emphasized traditional 'Roman' qualities, such as generosity and respect for the city's institutions. Senators are shown side-by-side with the emperor and his officials, and the *populus Romanus* is also depicted in reliefs celebrating Constantine's presence in Rome (Fig. 2.1). Furthermore, the reuse of sculptural decoration linked the new emperor to previous, good rulers.<sup>10</sup> The Senate was thus able to assert what it expected from the new and victorious *dominus*, whilst paying tribute to his victories. Far from exceptional,



Fig. 2.1. The *adlocutio* relief, Rome, Arch of Constantine.

Photo: Fabio Barry.

<sup>9</sup> See Mayer (2002), esp. chapter 1.

<sup>10</sup> See, from an enormous bibliography, Liverani (2005). On the question of reuse, see Pensabene (2015) 92–108 and Ward-Perkins (1999) 232–3.

this type of negotiation was a constant concern among late antique builders and commissioners of monuments. It is necessary, therefore, to consider who was involved in public building if we want to understand the transformation of the image and physical condition of the city.

### Imperial Commissions at a Local Level

Imperial projects, whether new buildings or restorations, were necessarily managed at a local level. During the early empire, this was done by the large number of imperial officials living and working in Rome, responsible for the management of the many different issues related to the organization of the city's building industry.<sup>11</sup> This administrative system underwent important transformations at the beginning of our period, when public building was placed under the control of the urban prefect, and all officials related to any form of building activity in the *Urbs* were placed under his authority and incorporated into his office.<sup>12</sup> For the inhabitants of late antique Rome as well as for modern scholars, the many inscriptions mentioning the *praefectus urbi* in works as diverse as the restoration of buildings used for entertainment, fountains, and even churches were (and still are) the most visible expression of this reality.

According to André Chastagnol, the creation of the late antique urban prefecture should be dated to the reign of Constantine, more specifically to the period between 321 and 326.<sup>13</sup> However, the reform of the administration of public building in Rome was probably already under way at the time of the construction of the Aurelian Wall (271–82). The imperative to reorganize the building industry in a way that would suit the demands of such an enterprise probably required adaptations in the workings of the public building industry.<sup>14</sup> The eastern chronicler Malalas recorded, in the sixth century, that the court forced the city's guilds and professional associations to take part in the effort, and later renamed them 'Aurelian' as a reward.<sup>15</sup> The need to control the city's associations, the number of workers employed, the administrative and legal issues involved, and the scale of the operations of demolition and construction required coordination and supervision at an unprecedented level. It is likely, therefore, that the reforms of the Constantinian period were actually the culmination of a longer evolution.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Daguet-Gagey (1997) 95–113, for a discussion of the early imperial organization of public building.

<sup>12</sup> This is shown by the early fifth-century *Notitia dignitatum*, as well as by later texts, such as Cassiodorus' *Variae* and the Justinianic *Pragmatic Sanction*. See Chastagnol (1960) 43.

<sup>13</sup> Chastagnol (1960) 30–6.

<sup>14</sup> See, for the building of the wall, Coates-Stephens (2012A).

<sup>15</sup> Malalas 12.30.

<sup>16</sup> Dey (2011) 90 suggests that the *curator operum publicorum* was the official in charge of the wall, but the scale of the works involved administrative and legal issues that went beyond the remit of this official.

The power exercised by the *praefectus urbi* was defined and increased by a series of imperial decisions that both expanded his remit and established limits for his actions. Imperial authorization was required to start new building projects, and the emperors warned in 376 that any prefect who started new works without permission of the court would have to complete them with his own funds.<sup>17</sup> An edict received by the urban prefect Caeionius Rufius Volusianus in 390 determined that any official starting works on a new building would not only have to pay for its completion, but would also be fined.<sup>18</sup> The number of laws dealing with this same issue suggest that this was a recurring problem, and that prefects felt a constant need to consult with the court about them.

The workings of this late imperial system is best exemplified by the building of the basilica dedicated to the apostle Paul on Via Ostiensis. This basilica represented one of the last great imperial commissions in the city, and is particularly interesting because for this case at least we are well informed about the circumstances of its construction. A letter preserved in the *Collectio Avellana* informs us that the emperors Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius commissioned the urban prefect Sallustius to build a new church to the apostle, on a much grander scale than the one that existed on this site.<sup>19</sup> The date of Sallustius' prefecture, traditionally assumed to be 383–4, is controversial, but what matters to us is the extent to which the prefect was responsible for the project, an imperial commission of a Christian building.<sup>20</sup> Sallustius was instructed to send a study of the area to the emperors and oversee the elaboration of a building project and its budget. This had to be done in agreement with the bishop of Rome, and the prefect was also responsible for consulting the Senate about works on the road connecting the Porta Ostiensis to the basilica.<sup>21</sup> Even though the church was always identified as an imperial project,<sup>22</sup> commissioned and funded by the emperors, it is clear that the office of the urban prefecture was involved in all phases of the building works.

The role played by an urban prefect could be acknowledged even after the end of his term, as shown by a group of inscriptions found in the Tiber at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> These inscriptions celebrated the restoration of a bridge during the reign of Valentinian I and Valens. The project commemorated the brothers' joint rule, their military victories, and the anniversary of their accession to the throne. The inscriptions also recorded the role played in the construction by

<sup>17</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.19 (addressed to the Senate), and see also 15.1.11 (from 364).

<sup>18</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.27. On the powers of the urban prefect regarding building, see Chastagnol (1960) 353–71.

<sup>19</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 3. See Chastagnol (1994B) and Martinez-Fazio (1972).

<sup>20</sup> The traditional date is advocated by, among others, Chastagnol (1962) 216–18. For criticism of this date, see Liverani (2003).

<sup>21</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 3.

<sup>22</sup> As proclaimed by the inscription on the archway leading to the altar: *ILCV* 1761a; it was also perceived as an imperial foundation by visitors: see Prud., *Perist.* 12.47–9.

<sup>23</sup> *CIL* VI, 31402 = *LSA* 1820; *CIL* VI, 31403 = *LSA* 2584; *CIL* VI, 31404 = *LSA* 2585.

Lucius Aurelius Avianus Symmachus, *ex praefectus urbi*, who not only organized it, but who was also responsible for the ceremony of its dedication (an opportunity that would have seemed irresistible for a pagan *pontifex*): 'To Victoria Augusta, the companion of our lords and princes. The Senate and Roman people [set this up], having taken care and dedicated L(ucius) Aur(elianus) Avianus Symmachus, of *clarissimus* rank, former prefect of the city.'<sup>24</sup> This was an imperial decision to grant Symmachus a special honour (possibly after a request by the Senate), and it is a good illustration of how prestigious the act of dedicating a building could be.<sup>25</sup>

From the mid-fourth century onwards, inscriptions recording the dedication of public works by prefects became a dominant feature in Rome's epigraphic record. This process was an important departure from what had been the practice during the early empire, and attests to the greater role played by the local elite. From the beginning of the imperial period, the language recording the involvement of local officials in public works had become increasingly circumscribed, stressing the role of the ruling emperor instead. By the beginning of the second century, the names of emperors usually appeared at the opening of dedicatory inscriptions as the subject of the action (in the nominative case), whereas the officials responsible for the actual works were relegated to the final part of the text (appearing, if they did at all, in the ablative case).<sup>26</sup> Most of the buildings that were not dedicated *by* emperors were dedicated *to* them, confirming imperial dominance in the early imperial epigraphic record. Private builders and local officials were still engaged in the patronage of publicly frequented structures, as one can see from the early imperial baths, *insulae*, and *horrea* named after their original patrons.<sup>27</sup> However, the means of public self-promotion were carefully limited and controlled by a zealous court.

In contrast, from the fourth century onwards, prefects seized every opportunity available for advertising their status and power.<sup>28</sup> It is possible to follow this evolution by looking at the language of late antique building inscriptions. Whereas Diocletian and Maximian claimed to be directly responsible for the construction of the imperial baths on the Viminal, their late fourth- and early fifth-century successors were often honoured by works undertaken by urban prefects, works actually dedicated *to* emperors (and not *by* them).<sup>29</sup> The increasing use of opening *formulae* such as *salvis dominis nostris* from the late fourth century onwards also

<sup>24</sup> As in *CIL* VI, 31403 = *LSA* 2584: 'Victoriae Augustae, / comiti dominorum / principumq(ue) nostror(um) / S(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) R(omanus), / curante e[t] dedicante / L(ucio) Aur(elio) Aviano Symmacho, v(iro) c(larissimo), / ex praefectis urbi.' For the inauguration of the bridge and the involvement of Symmachus, see Lizzi Testa (2004) 447–54.

<sup>25</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.3.

<sup>26</sup> A process analysed in Eck (1984) 137.

<sup>27</sup> I owe this observation to R. Coates-Stephens.

<sup>28</sup> Noted by Löhken (1982) 75–6.

<sup>29</sup> For the Baths of Diocletian, see *CIL* VI, 1130 = 31242 = *EDR* 110850. For examples of monuments dedicated to emperors, see *CIL* VI, 1184a = *EDR* 129622, dedicated in the Forum to Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius in 379/384, and the restoration of an unidentified building near the Forum Boarium in 425, dedicated to Valentinian III (*CIL* VI, 1677 = *EDR* 129296). But see the imperial dedication of the Basilica of S. Paul: *ILCV* 1761.

points in this same direction. Rather than a dedication of a work to a specific emperor, these expressions were used both to date the occasion on which the work took place and to connect it to the *salus*, the physical and moral condition of the ruler(s)—and, by extension, of the empire.<sup>30</sup>

This new attitude in the dedication of public works is more evident in a series of restorations carried out in the Colosseum during the fifth century.<sup>31</sup> The amphitheatre was restored at some point at the beginning of that century, and this work was recorded in two long identical inscriptions placed on either side of the arena. The reconstruction of this text is difficult, in the first place because it was later erased and replaced by a new one, but also because the inscriptions were broken into many fragments at a still later date. However, Silvia Orlandi's analysis of the surviving fragments (eighty inscribed blocks of marble) shows that these works were carried out during the joint reign of Honorius and Theodosius II, probably under the term of Iunius Valerius Bellicius as urban prefect (possibly in 421–3). The works are advertised as being very comprehensive, from the foundations (*a fundamento*). It is striking that the prefect appears as the only person responsible even in such a large-scale restoration of a very important imperial monument, whereas the emperors are mentioned only in the opening salutation (*Salvis dominis nostris*).<sup>32</sup>

Soon afterwards, the inscription of Bellicius was erased and replaced by another (in two copies as well). It is certain that the works to which this text refers were carried out during the joint reign of Theodosius II and Valentinian III, and the analysis of blocks belonging to both copies led Orlandi to convincingly suggest that the restoration was undertaken by Flavius Paulus, *vir clarissimus* and *praefectus urbi*, possibly in 438.<sup>33</sup> It is impossible to know exactly what was involved in this restoration, but a sequence of blocks (preserved in both copies) informs us that they were done 'for the greater favour and pleasure' (*ad maiorem gratiam voluptatemque*) of the Roman people.<sup>34</sup> Although the work was important, and presented as a gift to the Roman people, it was neither dedicated *by* nor *for* the emperors: a group of fragments reveals that they were saluted at the opening of the inscription, but that the works were attributed to the urban prefect alone.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Chastagnol (1988A) 15–16; also Orlandi (1997) 31.

<sup>31</sup> I follow here the essential work of Orlandi (2004). See also, for a more concise presentation of her findings, Orlandi (1999).

<sup>32</sup> CIL VI, 32085–7, with discussion in Orlandi (2004) 67–86. Orlandi's reconstruction remains very uncertain, as she reminds us, but at least the parts discussed in this paragraph seem beyond doubt: '[Salvi]s d(ominis) n(ostris) Honorio et Theodo[sio] invictissimis et optimis Au[gg. (?) Iunius] Vale[r]ius Be[llicius] [--- praefectus] ur[bi] [--- amph]ithea[trum a] f[undamento] [---] om[ni] q[uoque] cu[l]tu[m] a[re]a[m] [aratu]q[ue] a[re]a[m] [restitu]it et mu[ni]vit (?) area[m]q[ue] [---]' (Orlandi (2004) 86).

<sup>33</sup> CIL VI, 32088 (Orlandi (2004) 118); see Orlandi (2004) 103–9.

<sup>34</sup> See frags 8.5 (three blocks) and 8.20 (four blocks) in Orlandi (2004) 90 and 94. A reference to the *populus Romanus* usually accompanied the expression *voluptas* in the epigraphy of this period: Orlandi (2004) 114.

<sup>35</sup> See frag. 8.1 (three blocks) in *ibid.*, 88: '[---] felicitate d(ominis) n(ostris)'; and also the singular form of the verb used, *instauravit*: frag. 8.6 in *ibid.* 90.

The Colosseum underwent new restoration works in 484. Evidence for these works is provided by three statue bases that were found inside the complex (one of which was later lost). The inscription carved on the bases of the statues records the circumstances of the works: ‘Decius Marius Venantius Basilius, of *clarissimus* rank and *inlustris*, urban prefect, patrician, ordinary consul, restored with his own funds the arena and the podium that an abominable earthquake destroyed’.<sup>36</sup> In the late fifth century, the West was no longer under the direct rule of a Roman emperor. However, we do have inscriptions that saluted the Ostrogothic kings who ruled Italy at that time, and even an eastern emperor.<sup>37</sup> The inscription recording the statues dedicated to Basilius does not mention any of them. It is a personal monument to the prefect who restored the podium and the arena of the amphitheatre with his own funds. It is possible that this work was also recorded by a conventional building inscription, now lost, and that this would have mentioned the rulers of Italy or the empire—but there is no trace of it. In any case, for those visiting the greatest amphitheatre still functioning in the Mediterranean world, the image of this aristocrat, placed there to be seen by all, would be the one directly connected to the restoration.

### Roman builders

In addition to urban prefects, members of the Church, local officials, the Senate, and even private donors also left their imprint on the cityscape. The Roman Church was, in fact, the only institution that eventually came to play a role as important as the civil administration in this sphere. Scholars have shown how imperial and private donations, legal privileges, and religious standing enabled the bishop of Rome and members of the clergy to compete with traditional patrons and imperial authorities in the shaping of the city.<sup>38</sup> This process required the organization of a specifically Christian bureaucracy, and although this was probably quite sophisticated already by the mid-fourth century, we still know very little about the organization of ecclesiastic building works.<sup>39</sup> An epitaph found near Via Latina mentions the presbyter Tigrinus, who restored ‘sacred buildings in different places’, suggesting that by the middle of the fifth century there were clerics who were responsible for building and restoring Christian structures.<sup>40</sup> However,

<sup>36</sup> *CIL* VI, 1716a–c = *LSA* 1419–21: ‘Decius Marius Venantius Basilius, / v(ir) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris), praefectus / urbi, patricius, cons(ul) / ordinarius, arenam / et podium, quae abominandi terrae motus / ruina prostravit, sumptu proprio restituit’. On Basilius, see *PLRE* II, Basilius 13, and also Orlandi (2004) 52–6.

<sup>37</sup> Such as *CIL* VI, 41423 (Odoacer), 1665 (Theoderic) and 1794 = 40807 (Theoderic and Anastasius).

<sup>38</sup> See the essays collected in Cooper and Hillner (2007).

<sup>39</sup> Sotinel (1998) 115–17.

<sup>40</sup> *ICUR* n.s. VI, 15842: ‘diversis reparo tecta sacra locis’. See, for the date, *PCBE* 2 (Italie), Tigrinus. See also *Lib. Pont.* I, 220, for a reference to participation of the presbyters Ursicinus and Leopardus and the deacon Livianus in the building of the *titulus Vestinae*.

as the example of the Basilica of S. Paul suggests, it is very likely that bishops continued resorting to the secular administration for their major projects for some time, possibly until the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>41</sup> This did not prevent them from affirming their glory and status, as in the mosaic inscription on the triumphal arch of S. Maria Maggiore, recording that the building was a donation of bishop Sixtus to the *plebs* of God.<sup>42</sup>

If the involvement of clerics grew, the same cannot be said of local officials, whether subordinated to the prefecture or to the imperial government. Their participation in public works is attested for the whole late antique period, but it declined with the passing of time. The *praepositus* Flavius Antigonus (head of an unspecified office) and the *vicarius urbis* Valerius Anthidius, for example, were responsible for restorations in the city between 367 and 381.<sup>43</sup> In the mid-fifth century, a former *comes ordinis primi et formarum* (count of the first order and of the aqueducts) and his successor celebrated the restoration of an aqueduct, and different officials were responsible for works in the Ostrogothic period.<sup>44</sup> Urban prefects were still responsible for most building activity, but these examples remind us that other officials also sought the glory of having a work dedicated in their name. It also shows that other members of the Roman elite, even those who did not attain the highest magistrature, could claim to be interested in the city's urban fabric.

The Senate, as an organized institution, was involved in the dedication of a small number of monuments. However, it is very likely that even in these cases the *praefectus urbi* was ultimately responsible for overseeing the works. According to the *Historia Augusta*, the consul who presided over an important senatorial meeting that acclaimed Maximus and Balbinus emperors in 238 was reprimanded by a senator for wasting time discussing minor issues, while Maximinus Thrax was on his way to attack the city. The 'minor issues' keeping senators distracted were the restoration of temples, the decoration of a basilica, works on the Baths of Titus, and the building of an amphitheatre.<sup>45</sup> Although certainly fictitious, this account might reflect the involvement of the Senate in discussions related to the planning of public works. This is attested to in the letter sent by the imperial court to the prefect Sallustius commissioning the Basilica of S. Paul, where the urban prefect was instructed to consult the venerable institution about works on the road leading to the new foundation.<sup>46</sup> It seems that, rather than being unimportant, the Curia still played a role in the upkeep of the city, perhaps as a consulting body.

Although the Senate probably had to act through the prefecture for actual construction works, it still took public credit for the dedication of buildings.

<sup>41</sup> See Carletti (2008) 103–13. <sup>42</sup> *ILCV* 975a: 'Xystus episc(o)pus plebi dei'.

<sup>43</sup> Respectively, *CIL* VI, 1179 = *EDR* 111500 (367–75) and *CIL* VI, 3865 = *EDR* 112709 (381).

<sup>44</sup> *CIL* VI, 1765 = *EDR* 111539 (for the aqueduct). For the Ostrogothic period, see for example Cass., *Var.* 6.15; 6.18; 7.5; 7.6; 7.7; 7.13; 7.15.

<sup>45</sup> *SHA, Max. et Balb.* 1.4.

<sup>46</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 3.2.



This is the case of prestigious monuments, such as the triumphal arches of Constantine and of Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius.<sup>47</sup> The late fourth-century inscription recording the restoration of the Temple of Saturn, in the Roman Forum, does not mention any other authority, not even the ruling emperors.<sup>48</sup> Aurelius Victor, when describing the rededication of the Temple of Venus and Rome after its early fourth-century restoration, records that this was neither carried out by Maxentius, who undertook the restoration, nor by his successor Constantine, but *by the Senate to Constantine*.<sup>49</sup> The fact that a temple, originally dedicated by an emperor (Hadrian) to two deities, could be rededicated by the Senate to a different emperor is a good indication of the authority still enjoyed by the Curia when it came to religious buildings and the city's traditional structures. Senatorial dedications are not attested to after the beginning of the fifth century, however, and it is tempting to see this development as a consequence of the concentration of powers in the hands of the urban prefect, as well as in the progressive political decline of the Senate.

Private donors were also involved in building. Bryan Ward-Perkins traced the decline of private munificence in his study of public building in late antique Italy, and showed that Rome followed the same trend.<sup>50</sup> We still find evidence for the restoration or foundation of structures dedicated to public entertainment and amenities, such as the Baths of Naeratius Cerealis, Basilus' works in the Colosseum, and even the Theatre of Pompey, restored by Symmachus.<sup>51</sup> Some of the works carried out by important Roman officials should also be considered examples of private munificence, as the positions they occupied did not require building in Rome. The general Flavius Ricimer, for instance, commissioned a mosaic for the Church of S. Agata in the 470s, and the praetorian prefect Ioannes restored the Curia during the reign of Theoderic.<sup>52</sup> These were powerful officials and aristocrats, active and interested in Rome, but although their official positions certainly gave them access to the city's administration, they acted out of their own interests.

Aristocrats were intimately connected to the physical transformation of late antique Rome, playing a crucial role in this process. Be it as imperial officials or private agents, be it preserving or redefining the cityscape, members of the local senatorial elite were in a favourable position to identify Rome's urban fabric with their own social standing and interests. Perhaps just as importantly, even amidst a

<sup>47</sup> Respectively *CIL* VI, 1139 = *LSA* 2669 and *CIL* VI, 1196 = *LSA* 1311.

<sup>48</sup> *CIL* VI, 937 = *EDR* 105657. On this restoration, see Chapter 3, pp. CP3.P17. The same might be the case with the restoration of the nearby Temple of Concord (*CIL* VI, 89), if contemporary.

<sup>49</sup> Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 40.26: 'Adhuc cuncta opera, quae magnifice construxerat, urbis fanum atque basilicam Flavii meritis patres sacravere'.

<sup>50</sup> See Ward-Perkins (1984) 14.

<sup>51</sup> For the Baths of Cerealis: *CIL* VI, 1744–5 = *LSA* 1446–55; Colosseum: *CIL* VI, 1716a–c = *LSA* 1419–21; Theatre of Pompey: Cass., *Var.* 4.51, but, as seen earlier, Symmachus was actually commissioned by the government in Ravenna.

<sup>52</sup> Ricimer: *ILCV* 1637; Atalaric mentions Ioannes' works in a letter to his son Reparatus: Cass., *Var.* 9.7; see *PLRE* II, Ioannes 67 for his career.

process of dramatic urban change, they could still see and present themselves in a rather old-fashioned way, as traditional sponsors and protectors of city life.

### The Motivations for Building

Why did late Roman aristocrats build? We must consider this basic question if we want to understand the physical transformations that reshaped the city of Rome during this period. And yet, answering it is not as straightforward as it might seem at first sight. Urban prefects and other officials built, in the first place, because it was part of their job, at least to restore and strengthen pre-existing structures. The problem is that this does not account for all the projects in which they were involved. Most of the edicts issued by the imperial court that deal with building works in Rome were concerned with regulating building activity already underway, rather than commanding people to build. This shows that there was an actual interest in building on the part of local officials. We need to look beyond the formalities of late Roman government practice if we want to understand the reasons why aristocrats were involved in building, considering the ideological assumptions shared by members of the aristocracy, the elements that motivated, justified, and gave meaning to this practice.

A good starting point for this discussion is a letter sent around 400 by the Christian aristocrat Paulinus of Nola, in which he explained to a friend why he decided to build a church at Fondi (approximately 100 km to the south of Rome): 'I therefore decided to give Fondi a new church, both as a kind of token of affection for the town and as a memorial to my old estate, since it needed a new church, having only a small and ruinous one'.<sup>53</sup> Paulinus' basilica in Fondi was a large building, measuring approximately 35 x 20 m, equipped with a triconch apse, and decorated with marble columns and pavement.<sup>54</sup> The building was connected to the refurbished shrine of the martyr Felix by a courtyard. Although a Christian, writing about the dedication of a religious structure, Paulinus presented his action in a way that would be perfectly understood by a traditional Roman aristocrat.<sup>55</sup> Public utility, personal celebration, and civic pride were, after all, traditional values in aristocratic culture, and we must consider each one of them.

### The utility of building works

The need for restoring and building public structures was a very practical and, in late antiquity, pressing matter. The decline of Roman monuments and buildings

<sup>53</sup> Paul. Nola, *Ep.* 32.17 (transl. and discussed in Ward-Perkins (1984) 68).

<sup>54</sup> See Brown (2012) 228–9 for a brief discussion of the building.

<sup>55</sup> Trout (1999) 147–8, discusses Paulinus' presentation of the project.

presented a problem not just because of nostalgia, but also because they were seen as necessary in the unfolding of daily life. Concern for public structures and their use is well illustrated by the works undertaken by Iulius Felix Campanianus. In the mid-fifth century, Campanianus and Tarpeius Annius Faustus restored an aqueduct, possibly a branch of the Aqua Claudia-Anio Vetus that fed the nymphaeum of Alexander Severus (the so-called trophies of Marius) on the Esquiline. The works were probably started by the former and completed by the latter, his successor as *curator* of the aqueducts.<sup>56</sup> At a later date (probably 467), when Campanianus was urban prefect, he dedicated a statue 'to the greater pleasantness' (*ad augendam gratiam*) of the Baths of Trajan.<sup>57</sup> Aqueducts, baths, and fountains were fundamental parts of Roman civilization, in both a pragmatic and cultural sense, and Campanianus' interventions illustrate how these elements were related.

The question of utility was not a small issue in late antique Rome. The inscription celebrating the building (actually a restoration) of the Bridge of Valentinian in 368 recorded the fact that the works had been carried out 'for the utility of the eternal city'.<sup>58</sup> In the early fifth century, the urban prefect Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus recorded the restoration of the Porticus Minucia in the Campus Martius to its former condition of use.<sup>59</sup> It was important to celebrate the fact that life went on as usual, and that the spaces that constituted the glory of Rome were still available. When Valentinian III, in 440, took a series of measures to ensure that the food supply of the city and the restoration and defence of its walls would be guaranteed, he claimed to be doing it out of concern for the city's security and to ensure the abundance of food.<sup>60</sup> Building for the community or the city, in this way, was also a way of celebrating one's role as its patron. It was an important element in late antique discourses of power,<sup>61</sup> and both emperors and aristocrats took part in it.

### Personal monuments

Every monument dedicated in the city was a personal monument, a memorial to the generosity and zeal of its builder. This can be seen in the interventions carried out by members of the Anician family in the northern Campus Martius where Acilius Glabrio Sibidius founded a forum between the late fourth and the early fifth century (Fig. 1.2). As we saw in the previous chapter, this was a busy and important area for the social and economic life of the city, especially for the

<sup>56</sup> *CIL* VI, 1765 = *EDR* 111539. For the identification of the aqueduct, see Coates-Stephens (2001) 226–7. See Coarelli (2008) 257 for the identification of the nymphaeum.

<sup>57</sup> *CIL* VI, 1670 = *LSA* 1352. On Campanianus and his prefecture, see Scharf (1992) 278.

<sup>58</sup> *CIL* VI, 31402 = *LSA* 1820: 'utilitate urbis aeternae'.

<sup>59</sup> *CIL* VI, 1676 = *EDR* 111460. <sup>60</sup> Val. III, *Nov.* 5.1.

<sup>61</sup> Discussed by R. B. Smith (2003).

working of the imperial *annona*. It is possible that Sibidius founded his monument privately, as his *cursus* (as we have it) does not record any magistracy in the city.<sup>62</sup> Years later, his son Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, three times urban prefect and consul, dedicated statues celebrating the career and accomplishments of his father, his maternal grandfather, and his father-in-law Tarrutenius Maximilianus.<sup>63</sup> Faustus celebrated, in this way, his family links and impressive personal standing, as well as his father's gift to the Romans. That building was an efficient way of inscribing one's name in the history and landscape of the city was one of the arguments used by Belisarius to prevent the Ostrogoth Totila from destroying the *Urbs* in 546; Rome was, the Byzantine general observed, built by a 'multitude of monarchs', and a 'company of the best men'.<sup>64</sup>

Building inscriptions promoted the link between builders and city spaces, sometimes referring explicitly to previous works. This is illustrated by the structures adjoining the Senate house (Fig. 3.1). One inscription, recording repair of the Secretarium Senatus (in 412–14), mentioned works carried out in that same building a few years earlier, by Nicomachus Flavianus.<sup>65</sup> Another inscription, datable to around 420 and found in the area identified as the late antique Atrium Libertatis, records the restoration of a structure that might have been originally built by Vettius Agorius Praetextatus during his urban prefecture in 367.<sup>66</sup> This was true for other parts of the city too. One inscription, of which the place of discovery is uncertain, attests to works by Caecina Decius Acinatus Albinus on the Basilica Piniana. This building is not mentioned in any other source, but its name suggests a foundation by Pinianus, urban prefect in 385–7.<sup>67</sup> The close identification of a public building with its patron was common at the time of the Republic, when important structures like aqueducts and roads were often named after their founders. This changed during the Principate, when members of the imperial family were identified with a growing number of structures in the city, in spite of a few notable exceptions.<sup>68</sup> This situation changed again in late antiquity, when Roman senators became increasingly (and openly) identified with their buildings. Early Christian *tituli* were named after their patrons, and, as the inscriptions recording works in the Forum show, even the monumental centre of the city was part of this process. This signals a striking transformation in the very conception of urban space, which took on a decidedly more openly senatorial character.

<sup>62</sup> See *PLRE* I, Sibidius.

<sup>63</sup> Respectively, *CIL* VI, 1678 = *LSA* 1393; *CIL* VI, 37119 = 31389a = *LSA* 1577; *CIL* VI, 1767 = *LSA* 1466. Although not found *in situ*, the latter probably has the same provenance as the others, see discussion in *LSA* 1466.

<sup>64</sup> *Proc.*, *Wars* 7.22.9–16. <sup>65</sup> *CIL* VI, 1718 = *EDR* 111471.

<sup>66</sup> As suggested in *CIL* VI, 41378 = *EDR* 073920. See below, pp. 112–13.

<sup>67</sup> *CIL* VI, 40805 = *EDR* 093154. The inscription is thought to have been found in the southern Campus Martius: Liverani (2003) 76.

<sup>68</sup> See Eck (1984) 141 for this process.

The imperial concern with limitations to new building works in Rome, so evident in the laws, becomes more significant in this context. It was not just an attempt to control expenses and prevent embezzlement, but also to limit the association of aristocrats with the monuments of the city. The same concern was expressed in imperial legislation trying to regulate inscriptions on monuments. An edict addressed by the emperors Arcadius and Honorius to the praetorian prefect of the East in 394 declared that the official who inscribed his own name on a finished building, rather than that of the emperors, had committed a crime of high treason.<sup>69</sup> Although this law was not addressed specifically to Rome, the issue was certainly the same: Ammianus, also writing in the 390s, criticizes the vanity of the urban prefect Volusianus (365), who used to inscribe his name on buildings erected by past emperors, not as their restorer but as founder.<sup>70</sup>

Roman aristocrats felt it very important to advertise works carried out under their supervision, and this is illustrated by a very peculiar group of objects. These are some very small bronze tokens, of rectangular form (resembling postal stamps), some of them with letters incised on silver strips attached to them, sometimes on one side only, sometimes on both sides.<sup>71</sup> The inscriptions are very simple, hailing the rulers and naming the official (usually the urban prefect) responsible for a construction or restoration: ‘Salvo d(omino) n(ostro) / Valntinia/ no (sic), p(er)p(etuo) Aug(usto)’ (and on the other side) ‘Paulinus, / v(ir) c(larissimus), praef(ectus) / urb(i) fecit’.<sup>72</sup> A few mention two series of works, probably carried out by relatives: ‘Salvis dd(ominis) / nn(ostris) Albi/nus fecit’—and on the other side—‘Basilius reparavit’ (both members of the *gens Deciana*).<sup>73</sup>

These tokens use a similar language to that of building inscriptions, and two explanations have been offered for their issue: they could have been inserted into the fabric of walls, to mark their erection; or they could be sent by the person responsible for the works recorded to friends and officials in other parts of the empire.<sup>74</sup> None of these theories can be proved, and the fact that the context of discovery of most of them remains uncertain is a further complication. Many of these objects were found in different parts of the empire, including northern Italy and modern-day France, and this seems to reinforce the latter interpretation.

<sup>69</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.31. This concern already existed at the time of Antoninus Pius: *Dig.* 50.10.7.

<sup>70</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.7.

<sup>71</sup> Collected in *CIL XV*, 7106–20. Although sizes vary, they fall within the range of h. 17–27 mm x w. 16–29 mm. Note that *CIL XV*, 7120 is slightly larger, h. 32 mm and w. 36 mm, and its editor suggested it might be a different type of object—which is unlikely, if we consider the similarities. These objects weigh around 2–3 g. For an updated catalogue of these objects and detailed descriptions, see Kulikowski (2017).

<sup>72</sup> *CIL VI*, 7106 = *EDR* 130226 = Kulikowski (2017) 6, n. A1 (with corrections), datable to 450–2 (Orlandi (1997) 35).

<sup>73</sup> *CIL XV*, 7115a–b = *EDR* 145152–3. These men could be *PLRE I*, Albinus 10 or *PLRE II*, Albinus 7 and *PLRE II*, Basilius 11.

<sup>74</sup> Suggested by De Rossi (1866) 126. See also the comments in *CIL XV*, p. 887. Kulikowski (2017) 33–8 discusses these issues but does not offer a solution to the question.

Whatever the correct explanation, they attest to the eagerness of urban prefects and other officials to advertise their association with the city's monuments and spaces.

### Civic pride and power

Civic pride was also an important motivation for building. For example, a statue base found in the area of the Curia records works carried out by the urban prefect Anicius Agilius Aginantius Faustus at the end of the fifth century. The statue had been destroyed by the collapse of a roof, caused by a fire, and was restored for the 'happiness of the times'.<sup>75</sup> Late antique inscriptions stressed the role played by dedicators in public works, recording the state of these buildings and spaces before the restoration, emphasizing the ruinous state in which they were found and celebrating the restoration of happiness and prosperity. The large number of surviving late Roman inscriptions that explicitly record the damage or decay of old structures is an important element in this context. In the Forum, the Temple of Saturn and the Atrium Libertatis were both destroyed by fire, and the same happened to the baths restored by the empress Helena in the area of the Sessorian Palace.<sup>76</sup> Earthquakes, lack of care, old age, and civil conflicts were also cited as reasons for restorations.<sup>77</sup> Inscriptions could sometimes exaggerate the ruined state of a building, as a way of enhancing the importance of restoration works—a practice that is well attested to in earlier periods.<sup>78</sup> And yet, late Roman authorities seem to have been genuinely concerned with the state of ancient structures. This was stressed in the legislation addressed to officials in Rome (and elsewhere) on different occasions. Constantine sent representatives around the cities of the empire to carry out a survey of the state of buildings, and later emperors frequently admonished prefects in Rome and governors elsewhere to look after older structures.<sup>79</sup> One of the distinctive characteristics of the late antique period is the extent to which any city's urban fabric needed repair, and how complicated it was to see to it.<sup>80</sup> As a result, city officials and private commissioners were involved in very practical issues related to building works. Roman aristocrats had, in this way, an opportunity for displaying their concern

<sup>75</sup> *CIL* VI, 526 = *LSA* 791.

<sup>76</sup> Respectively: *CIL* VI, 937 = *EDR* 105657; *CIL* VI, 1718 = *EDR* 111471; *CIL* VI, 1136 = *EDR* 111326.

<sup>77</sup> Earthquakes: *CIL* VI, 1716a–c = *LSA* 1419–21; lack of care: *CIL* VI, 1750 = *EDR* 111536; old age: *CIL* VI, 1165 = *EDR* 111337; civil conflict: *CIL* VI, 526 = *LSA* 791. For a longer list see G. Alföldy (2001A) 11–12.

<sup>78</sup> See discussion in Thomas and Witschel (1992).

<sup>79</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.2 (for Constantine). For imperial letters to prefects in Rome see, for example, *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.11 (364); 15.1.19 (376); 15.1.27 (390). To other parts of the empire: 15.1.3 (to a praetorian prefect, 326); 15.1.15 (to a *vicarius Africae*, 365); 15.1.27 (to a *consularis Piceni*, 390).

<sup>80</sup> See, for the East, Jacobs (2013) 644–55.

with the maintenance of the city, a concern that was more valued in a period in which the physical decay of public structures was visible to all.<sup>81</sup>

The monuments of Rome were part of the political rhetoric of the age, a symbol and a celebration of the empire and of the *Urbs*. Their very physicality meant that they could be visited and admired by emperors, pilgrims, traders, and—on a daily basis—the whole population of the city. They were, in other words, open to being appropriated by their founders, their restorers, and even by those who simply lived there. When petitioning the emperor Valentinian II to restore the altar of Victory to the Senate house, the urban prefect Symmachus (384) emphasized the respect and interest demonstrated by Constantius II, a Christian, when in Rome.<sup>82</sup> It was to the members of the Senate, the true owners of the city, that the emperor turned to enquire about the origins and identity of those buildings, acknowledging (in Symmachus' account) their identification with the monuments that symbolized his own empire.

A passage in the letter used to appoint the official responsible for the care of the aqueducts, in the Ostrogothic period, is a good illustration of how the monuments of Rome were seen:

Although one can scarcely select the most important building of Rome, since all are known to be beautiful, I think it is of interest that it is possible to distinguish between those founded for the provision of a necessary use and those that are commended for their beauty. The Forum of Trajan, even seen frequently, is a miracle; to ascend to the lofty Capitol is to see the works of human genius surpassed.<sup>83</sup>

Cassiodorus' description of the city, his emphasis on the beauty of its monuments and their impression on viewers, is a powerful illustration of the feelings that Rome's public structures could evoke. This celebration of a city through its monuments was the product of civic pride, as much as it was a rhetorical strategy. Late Roman aristocrats were in a position to claim the city's material heritage to be their preserve and responsibility. The very antiquity of their families (whether real or alleged) and of the Senate, the institution that they embodied, reinforced their association with the ancient monuments that defined the city-space.

Care for the public good, self-glorification, and civic pride were concerns shared by the municipal elites of the whole Mediterranean world, at least since

<sup>81</sup> G. Alföldy (2001A) 13; see also the remarks of Bauer (2001).

<sup>82</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 3.7. This passage will be discussed in Chapter 4, p. 127.

<sup>83</sup> Cass., *Var.* 7.6.1: 'Quamvis Romuleae fabricae collatae sibi vix possint praecipuae reperiri, quia ammirationem noscitur exquisitum, quod ibi cernitur esse fundatum, tamen interesse arbitramur, quod utilitas necessaria gratificat et quod pulchritudinis tantum causa commendat. Traiani forum vel sub assiduitate videre miraculum est: Capitolia celsa conscendere hoc est humana ingenia superata vidisse.' See also the comments of G. A. Cecconi, in Giardina (2015A) 202–5.

Hellenistic times.<sup>84</sup> These values help us to understand the motivations that led the late Roman aristocracy to take advantage of its position in the imperial system to assert itself more aggressively than it had done in centuries, in defining the cityscape. However, the traditional ideology of evergetism had acquired different connotations in late antique Rome, due to the very specific circumstances that affected the city. It is by considering these circumstances that we can appreciate the complexity of Rome's physical transformations, and give full weight to the importance of building works in the social and economic strategies of this group.

### Senatorial Interests and Rome's Building Industry

A few years after his term as prefect (364–5), the house of Avianius Symmachus was attacked by an angry mob.<sup>85</sup> According to a rumour, Symmachus had said that he 'would rather use his own wine for extinguishing the fire of lime-kilns than sell it at the price that [the people] hoped for'.<sup>86</sup> The fact that an important senator would (allegedly) own utilitarian structures such as lime-kilns is a useful reminder of another important area for aristocratic economic investment: Rome's building industry.<sup>87</sup> Late antique Rome's urban fabric offered enormous possibilities to build in the largest city in the Mediterranean world, both for new building projects and for the repair of older structures. This involvement offered many opportunities for gain, be it in terms of economic profit, political standing, or social networks. This can be seen more clearly in three different aspects: the management of public funds, the supply of building material, and the organization of the workforce.

### Funding and embezzlement

The question of whether to begin a new construction or to restore a previously existing one was directly related to the problem of financing these works. Restoring the Baths of Constantine, for example, must have been much cheaper than building them. And yet, its fifth-century restorer claimed to have carried it out 'at as small expense as the situation of public funds allowed'.<sup>88</sup> Roman officials had

<sup>84</sup> See the classic study of Veyne (1976).

<sup>85</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.3–4. See *PLRE* I, Symmachus 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.4 (transl. Rolfe). The events took place between the winter of 374 and the summer of 375; see Lizzi Testa (2004) 379.

<sup>87</sup> The case of the elder Symmachus has been discussed with regards to his involvement in the wine trade. See Chastagnol (1960) 325; also Rougé (1961); and Mazzarino (1951) 351; for a recent discussion see Lizzi Testa (2004) 327–43.

<sup>88</sup> *CIL* VI, 1750 = *EDR* 111536: 'quantum publicae patiebantur angustiae'. See the remarks of Ward-Perkins (1984) 46.



access to different sources of funding, both regular and extraordinary. Special imperial grants are a good example of the latter. A small number of inscriptions record the fact that imperial generosity paid for the expenses. The restoration of the Aqua Virgo by Constantine, for example, was paid for with his own funds.<sup>89</sup> It is probable that other buildings dedicated *by* Emperors (and not *to* them) were also paid for with extraordinary imperial grants.<sup>90</sup> In these situations, the emperor would assign a sum of money to be used, probably based on a budget elaborated locally, and local officials would be responsible for the management of these funds. This is illustrated by the letter commissioning the Basilica of S. Paul, for example. In fact, as a law datable to 385 and addressed to the praetorian prefect indicates, officials were held responsible both for the works and for these funds even after the end of their term.<sup>91</sup> This practice continued in use in the Ostrogothic period: in the case of the letter sent to the patrician Symmachus by Theoderic commissioning the restoration of the Theatre of Pompey (discussed above), the Ostrogothic king mentions the allocation of royal funds to this enterprise.<sup>92</sup>

At least in principle, these imperial grants should remain extraordinary. Emperors could be very strict in trying to make sure that local funds would cover all normal expenses of maintenance and repair.<sup>93</sup> The general rule, applied to cities all over the empire, was that one third of the revenues originating from taxation of their own countryside would remain with the local council, and cover day-to-day expenses like the restoration of buildings.<sup>94</sup> The case of Rome was different, however. The preservation of the *Urbs* required more money than that of any other city in the empire; at the same time, the former imperial capital had a very special—and complex—fiscal situation. Restorations of aqueducts, for example, were funded by resources generated by a special category of publicly owned land, referred to as *cespes* or *praedia formensis*.<sup>95</sup> We gain a glimpse of the *Urbs*'s financial specificity in a law issued in 349, establishing that public works should be paid for with income from the *vectigalia* and from the different *arcae* of the city.<sup>96</sup> It is difficult to define what the *vectigalia* were. The term apparently covered different types of taxes exacted in Rome, from customs to fees paid by *peregrini* to sojourn in the city. The most important funds were the *arcae*, also

<sup>89</sup> *CIL* VI, 31564 = *EDR* 121962: 'pecunia sua'; see also *CIL* VI, 1184 = *EDR* 111505 and *CIL* VI, 40770a–b = *EDR* 075982 for other examples.

<sup>90</sup> As suggested by Lepelley (1999) 236. For examples of extraordinary grants, see *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.18 and 26.

<sup>91</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.24. <sup>92</sup> *Cass., Var.* 4.51.

<sup>93</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 5.14.35 and also 15.1.33 (both from 395).

<sup>94</sup> A principle repeated in many laws. See e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.18 and 33. See discussion in Lepelley (1999) and Lewin (2001).

<sup>95</sup> As suggested by *CIL* IX, 4051, recording restorations on the Aqua Marcia and Aqua Claudia. See Coates-Stephens (2003) for a discussion of these funds.

<sup>96</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.2: 'nam ex vectigalibus vel aliis titulis aedificare debuerunt'. See Chastagnol (1962) 128, for the identification of the addressee, Ulpian Limenius. For general issues of funding, see Chastagnol (1960) 336–9 (*vectigalia*) and 339–46 (*arcae*).

referred to as *tituli* in some documents. These consisted of a great variety of funds, from different sources, and at least in principle were addressed to specific expenses like the supply of grain and wine.

It was the uniqueness and complexity of Rome's fiscal situation that left the funding of building works exposed to irregularities and embezzlement. This is illustrated by an edict issued by Valentinian and Valens to the *praefectus urbi* Ceionius Rufius Volusianus in 365. Although it dealt with the specific problem of acquiring building material (discussed in more detail below), it sheds some light on the funding of construction works. The law regulated the payment of lime burners and transporters of lime, and established how much money should be paid and even how much lime should be ordered annually. The law then proceeded to regulate exemptions made to inhabitants of Tuscany, since they had already contributed to this fund, but stated that this privilege would be suspended in case of need.<sup>97</sup> The funds used for acquiring building material came from different cities, which could benefit from exemptions under certain circumstances. In the end, the urban prefect was left with the task of overseeing an incredibly complex system of funding, based on different sources and regulated by established rights, privileges, and favours.

The prefect could use these funds for various purposes, and it seems that the *arca vinaria*, the *arca* dedicated to the financing of the wine supply system, was his main source of funding, including for building works.<sup>98</sup> We are fortunate, in this context, to have information about the affair involving Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, *praefectus urbi* on two occasions during the reign of Constantius II.<sup>99</sup> Ammianus tells us that Orfitus' first term as prefect was marked by popular riots caused by a great scarcity of wine. Such scarcity could be related to the accusations made against the prefect years later (between 363 and 364), charging him with embezzlement of public funds.<sup>100</sup> The circumstances of the accusations and their developments are known to us through the highly biased account of Orfitus' son-in-law, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, urban prefect in 384.<sup>101</sup> According to the latter, Orfitus claimed to have used funds from the *arca vinaria* for public works, but his defence was not accepted and he later had his property confiscated and was exiled from the city. His punishment was only temporary, however, due to his political connections in the imperial court.<sup>102</sup> Investigations into the mismanagement of the *arca* were resumed more than a decade after the prefect's death. Orfitus' heirs, Symmachus' wife and her sister, were sentenced to pay back

<sup>97</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.3.

<sup>98</sup> As suggested by, among others, Chastagnol (1960) 341 and Ward-Perkins (1984) 41.

<sup>99</sup> In 353–6 and 357–9. See *PLRE* I, Orfitus 3 and Chastagnol (1962) 139–47.

<sup>100</sup> See *Amm. Marc.* 14.6.1 (for scarcity of wine) and 27.3.2 (accusations against Orfitus).

<sup>101</sup> Symmachus refers to the case in two main documents, *Relat.* 34 and *Ep.* 9.150. The case was analysed by Chastagnol (1960) 341–5 and (1962) 145–7. See also Vera (1981) 254–72.

<sup>102</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.7.3.

the money owed to the public funds. Symmachus then petitioned the court and an unnamed friend, appealing to the clemency of the emperor, arguing that the women had not inherited anything from their father—when in actual fact he had already transferred his property to his daughters while still alive.<sup>103</sup>

Although legislation made urban prefects personally responsible for these funds and threatened them with serious measures, corruption and mismanagement were part of the system. The emperor kept a close eye on his officials, and intra-aristocratic competition and rivalries fuelled accusations that kept the court informed of irregularities on the ground. Symmachus' references to enquiries made by imperial officials and the fact that Orfitus' case resurfaced years after his death are a good indication of this. Late antique Rome was not exceptional in this sense. The administration of the city fitted the same pattern as the imperial administration as a whole, in which a complicated web of officials, regulations, exemptions, and seemingly contradictory decisions by the court offered many possibilities for personal gain.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that public funds were commonly handled in irregular ways, to say the least. Although legal evidence should be treated with caution, as imperial legislation was often a response to a specific petition—and therefore open to manipulation—, they nevertheless offer a useful insight into the possibilities for illicit gain that were available to officials. A law datable to 390 warned the urban prefect Albinus against officials who, 'through usurpation', used public funds to start new buildings.<sup>104</sup> Another law, addressed to the urban prefect of Constantinople, forbade the compulsory purchase of expensive houses without imperial approval, suggesting that the payment of compensation for the compulsory sale of a property could be turned into an opportunity for private gain.<sup>105</sup> In Rome, not only could the urban prefect take advantage of building, but also his friends and associates could benefit from payments for services or properties related to building projects.<sup>106</sup> It is probable that the situation became more serious in the fifth and sixth centuries, as prefects grew more directly involved (and autonomous) in these works. It is noteworthy that mismanagement is a recurring issue in the correspondence between the Ostrogothic court of Theoderic and Roman officials. In one case, the *vir inlustris* Maximianus and the *vir spectabilis* Andreas were put in charge of investigating allegations of embezzlement of public funds allocated to works in Rome; in another, the urban prefect Artemidorus, responsible for a similar investigation,

<sup>103</sup> Symmachus' wife had been emancipated, probably as a strategy to protect the family's patrimony in case the process resumed, as it eventually happened: *Ep.* 9.150.3. Symmachus' appeal to the emperor can be found in *Relat.* 34.

<sup>104</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.27.

<sup>105</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.30.

<sup>106</sup> Prices of houses had been an issue during the construction of the Theatre of Marcellus (Dio 43.49.3), the Forum of Caesar (Cicero, *Att.* 89.8 (4.16.8)), and the Forum of Augustus (Suet., *Augustus* 56.2; *Res gestae* 21.1).

was praised for not hiding his discoveries. Remarks like these suggest that some prefects were ready to protect private interests when it came to this issue.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the two letters were probably written within a period of four years suggests that such problems were frequent.

Building was a very profitable activity for those involved in it, and the *praefectus urbi* naturally had pride of place in such illicit dealings. The late fourth-century *Carmen contra paganos* criticized the prefect 'who wasted the wine destined for Rome, and destroyed the ancient houses, towers, and roofs of ancestors, because he wanted to ruin the city', while he 'adorned the thresholds [of his own house] with laurels and gave banquets ...'.<sup>108</sup> Prudentius attacked urban prefects for their 'hunger for money', in a poem commemorating the martyrdom of S. Laurence. Although Prudentius wrote with a specific agenda in mind, it should be noted that this type of criticism was common currency in the whole late antique world.<sup>109</sup> The author of the anonymous *De rebus bellicis* criticized governors for whom 'even the sums allocated for defence-walls, are all time-honoured sources of profit and the eagerly-awaited opportunity for robbery'.<sup>110</sup>

Greed was not the only reason why aristocrats sought involvement in building works, and we must be very careful not to accept uncritically the judgement of contemporary writers. The rationale for building was more complex than just pecuniary gain, but what must be stressed here are the material and political interests of those involved in public works, especially when in a position of power. From the late third century onwards, as their administrative responsibilities and powers grew, prefects and their officials found themselves in an ideal position for making profit and favouring their friends. This is clear, also, when we think in terms of the materials used for building.

### The production and spoliation of building material

A great deal has been written on the materials and techniques used in late Rome's building industry.<sup>111</sup> It is not possible to have a detailed picture of how building material was supplied in late antique Rome, but we can appreciate the nature and extent of senatorial involvement in this process. Here, as with public funding, administrative irregularities and the pursuit of private advantages seem to have been common. The popular attack against the house of the urban prefect Ceionius

<sup>107</sup> Respectively, Cass., *Var.* 1.21 (from 507/511) and 2.34 (from 509–10).

<sup>108</sup> *Carmen contra paganos*, 38–41: 'non ipse est vinum patriae qui prodidit olim antiquasque domus, tures ac tecta priorum subvertens, urbi vellet cum inferre ruinam, ornaret lauro postes, convivia daret ...'. See discussion in Bartalucci (1998) 31–6 and Lizzi Testa (2004) 413–24.

<sup>109</sup> *Perist.* 2.45–6.

<sup>110</sup> *De reb. bell.* 4.4 (transl. Ireland).

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, the essays collected in Cecchelli (2001) and Santangeli Valenzani (2007A). For the Roman period in general see Adam (1999).

Rufius Volusianus in 365 is a suggestive example. According to Ammianus, the prefect's house was attacked because, when carrying out building works, he used to send officials around to seize whatever was required, instead of obtaining material with resources from the usual funds (*ex titulis solitis*).<sup>112</sup> As the reference to *tituli* indicates, the same system of *arcae* that existed for the funding of building works was in operation for the acquisition of building materials, and we can explore it by returning to the imperial edict regulating the city's supply of lime, mentioned above.

The supply and processing of lime was of crucial importance for building in ancient Rome because of its role in the production of concrete, and it is natural that government authorities should pay special attention to this activity. In the case of lime-burners and transporters, the edict of Valentinian determined that three-quarters of the sum owed to them (one *solidus*) should be paid by the owners of the properties from where lime was extracted (the *possessores*), and the remaining quarter should be paid by the prefecture with funds from the *arca vinaria*.<sup>113</sup> The edict also stipulated how much lime should be acquired each year ('not more than three thousand smaller cart-loads'),<sup>114</sup> the amount to be reserved for aqueducts, public buildings, and private houses; and the exemptions to be made to Terracina in Campania and to the cities of Tuscany. Officials working for the provincial government or for the urban prefecture were banned from involvement in the burning of lime, being threatened with the 'harshness of public punishment'.<sup>115</sup> The imperial ruling gives a 'public' and 'official' veneer to the workings of the whole system of supply of building material, claiming to be motivated by the need to 'restore the condition of the eternal city and to provide for the dignity of the public buildings'.<sup>116</sup> However, as the law reveals, private interests (*possessores* and house-owners) played a crucial role in Rome's supply of a building material without which there would be no public works. This is confirmed by another law, also addressed to an urban prefect, which informs us that landowners were destroying funerary monuments that existed in their properties to sell material to lime burners.<sup>117</sup> The elder Symmachus, as we saw above, was also said to own lime-kilns, and—if the rumours were true—would also have an interest in this business. The supply of lime was important and critical enough to merit a specific official to oversee it. Among Cassiodorus' *formulae* for appointing officials related to the administration of the city, one was dedicated to the

<sup>112</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.10.

<sup>113</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.3. See discussion in Jones (1964) 708–9.

<sup>114</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.3: 'non amplius quam terna milia minores vehes annuae'. It is not clear whether this was a definite amount, a maximum, or even a minimum (i.e. if the number of larger cart-loads was free).

<sup>115</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.3: 'austeritatem vigoris publici'.

<sup>116</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.3: 'Statum urbis aeternae reformare...ac providere publicorum moenium dignitati...'.  
<sup>117</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.2 (from 349).

*praepositus calcis*.<sup>118</sup> This official, responsible for managing the burning and distribution of lime to builders in the city, is not attested to in any other text, and it is possible that the supply of this particular building material was reorganized during the Ostrogothic period.

The imperially controlled system that supplied lime for works in the city was a complex operation, involving landowners, the *collegia* of lime-burners and transporters, and public officials, as well as the councils of cities seeking exemptions from the burden of contributing to it. Political pressure and economic interests were elements that imperial legislators repeatedly sought to control, but that could never be completely ruled out.<sup>119</sup> This picture can be complemented by what is known about the quality of the concrete used in late Roman buildings. The solidity of Roman walls was in large part due to the use of *pozzolana*, a volcanic material found in parts of Latium and Campania which, when mixed with lime, water, and sand, produces a mortar that is quick to solidify, resistant to the elements, and extremely durable. Not all builders employed mortar of the same quality, as the type of lime available and the proportions of the elements added to the mix varied according to economic and practical considerations.<sup>120</sup> During the late antique period, it became increasingly common to add fragments of crumbled tufa (either reused or newly quarried in the neighbourhood of Rome) to the mixture, reducing the quantity of *pozzolana* employed. As a result, late Roman buildings were frequently more unstable and fragile than their earlier counterparts—a characteristic that has been noted more clearly in public and private buildings in Ostia.<sup>121</sup> Whether late antique builders were particularly keen on cutting down the costs of their projects or being supplied with adulterated material, late antique structures were often of different standard from that of previous centuries. Being *possessores* of the lands in which these quarries were located and commissioners of building materials (in public and private works), it is more than likely that members of the city's elite were also involved in this practice.

Aristocrats also played a central role in the management of Rome's brick industry, especially when occupying the urban prefecture. Bricks had for centuries played a fundamental role in Roman building, and this was still true in late antiquity.<sup>122</sup> The production of bricks had become a virtual imperial monopoly during the second and early third century, when it reached its peak. Production declined after the Severan period, as the imperial government went through a phase of crisis. It was only towards the end of the third century that the situation

<sup>118</sup> Cass., *Var.* 7.17. See Jones (1964) 709, and G. A. Cecconi, in Giardina (2015A) 231–2.

<sup>119</sup> See *Cod. Theod.* 14.6.1–4, all dealing with these issues, and addressed to urban prefects.

<sup>120</sup> As noted by Adam (1999) 73.

<sup>121</sup> Practice discussed by Santangeli Valenzani (2007A) 441–2. This was also noted by Heres (1982) 32–3, specifically with regard to the houses of the Fortuna Annonaria, of the Porch, and the Forum Baths in Ostia.

<sup>122</sup> See the fundamental studies of Steinby (1986) and (2001).

began to change. The brick industry was completely reorganized between the reigns of Aurelian and Diocletian, when production resumed on a large scale. Private production of bricks also reappeared, as can be seen in both private and public buildings. However, the level of production did not remain high for very long. Brick production declined after Constantine, and it was never at the same scale as in the early fourth century, in spite of experiencing a new lease of life during the Ostrogothic period.<sup>123</sup> Being the main authority responsible for works in the city, prefects had a considerable margin for favouritism and for buying bricks from their friends and allies, a practice that was already common in the early imperial period.<sup>124</sup>

### Reused materials in late Roman construction works

New opportunities for gain emerged when the practice of reusing bricks became more common. It should not be forgotten that the greatest achievement of late antique Rome's building industry, the Aurelian Wall, was also its most impressive work of demolition and spoliation. Robert Coates-Stephens estimates that the area cleared for the building of the wall (and around it) was approximately 20 m wide, extending over 19 km of Rome's third-century urban fabric, generating an unprecedented amount of material ready to be reused.<sup>125</sup> Whereas the Tetrarchic and Constantinian building programmes still justified the maintenance of Rome's brick industry, the reuse of bricks became a more attractive option when demand declined after the mid-fourth century.<sup>126</sup> Major projects were still undertaken, and the Honorian works on the city walls are the best example of this.<sup>127</sup> This was an exceptional initiative, however, directed locally by the prefect himself—and the fact that even in this case builders employed reused bricks points to the more general bleak trends of the period.<sup>128</sup>

The reuse of building material, whether exposed as decoration or hidden in the masonry of a wall, was one of the defining characteristics of construction works in late antiquity. The widespread and systematic character of this practice suggests that it was an official and centrally planned operation, rather than just the result of opportunistic greed of individual builders.<sup>129</sup> After the demolitions caused by the

<sup>123</sup> Steinby (1986) 132–3 and also (2001) 144–5.

<sup>124</sup> Steinby (1986) 157–8. See also Steinby (1983) 220 (for early imperial Ostia).

<sup>125</sup> See Coates-Stephens (2012A) 96. For the importance of spoliation and re-use in Roman building in general, see Barker (2010).

<sup>126</sup> Santangeli Valenzani (2007A) 441. On the relationship between building techniques, building materials, and economic costing in the late Republic and early empire, see DeLaine (2001) 244. For the late empire, see Coates-Stephens (2001) 234.

<sup>127</sup> The walls were doubled in height, a continuous galleried walkway was added to it, and the towers and gates were completely rebuilt: see Dey (2011) 32–48.

<sup>128</sup> See *CIL* VI, 1188–90 = *LSA* 1306–8 for the involvement of the prefect.

<sup>129</sup> This is explored, with reference to the reuse of marble decoration, in Pensabene (2015). I have discussed the logistic and administrative aspects of this practice (with reference to statue bases) in Machado (2017).

building of the Aurelian Wall, the supply of reusable building material was kept steady by the abandonment and spoliation of older structures in different parts of the city and its suburbs—a practice that became more common with the passing of time. At least some (if not most) of this material was removed and stored in private and public deposits, supplying building activity through private builders, the market, or larger public projects. In fact, an early imperial dedication by members of a *collegium subrutorum*, interpreted by Theodor Mommsen as a professional association dedicated to demolition works, suggests that this organization was not something new, even if it reached unparalleled levels in late antiquity.<sup>130</sup>

There was a direct relationship between reuse and the transformations that occurred in urban space. This was already happening in the fourth century in areas like the Campus Martius and the Caelian, but it seems to have reached new levels during the fifth century.<sup>131</sup> This picture is complemented by what we know about the reuse of marble and architectural decoration in Ostia during the late antique period. In this case, the existence of deposits that supplied both public and private builders is suggested by the use of fragments of the *fasti Ostienses* in the revetment of fountains and nymphaea of private houses. These fragments have been found in different parts of the city, and some of them come from the same slab, indicating that they were dismantled and stored while waiting to be reused. The employment of pieces of marble with funerary inscriptions, frequently from the same necropolis, reinforce this conclusion.<sup>132</sup>

The connection between reuse, abandonment, and destruction can also be seen in the evolution of legislation issued by the court, which initially tried to forbid this practice, but eventually accepted it. A law from 365 condemned officials who despoiled the monuments of smaller towns to embellish provincial capitals and other splendid cities.<sup>133</sup> A decade later, a law addressed to the Roman Senate forbade the erection of new structures using marble taken from spoliated buildings.<sup>134</sup> The situation became more dramatic during the fifth century. A *novella* of Majorian, of 458, was especially concerned with the spoliation of buildings, and expressed imperial disapproval with the involvement of members of the urban prefect's staff in this activity.<sup>135</sup> Towards the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, there were circumstances in which the practice was considered acceptable. Theoderic observed, in a letter to the count Suna, that it was possible for Romans to reuse decoration and building materials from ruined

<sup>130</sup> *CIL* VI, 940 = *EDR* 103953. See the comments of Barker (2010) 128.

<sup>131</sup> Pensabene (1999) 755–6.

<sup>132</sup> See Pensabene (1998) 37. For the *fasti* of Ostia, see Bargagli and Grosso (1997) 13–17.

<sup>133</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.19.

<sup>134</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.14 (from 376).

<sup>135</sup> *Maj.*, Nov. 4. The involvement of prefects is also emphasized in Oppedisano (2013) 152–3.



buildings, as a way of clearing old structures of their ruins and strengthening and embellishing other structures.<sup>136</sup>

The reuse of building materials was visible all over the empire, and Rome, with its rich collection of monuments, was probably a haven for it. Even the most prestigious spaces were involved in this process. The discovery of a marble column from the temple of *Mars Ultor* in the Forum of Augustus with a late antique inscription is a good case in point. The inscription reads *PAT DECI*, and has been interpreted as the name of a patrician Decius inscribed in the genitive case. The position of the inscription, on the flat side of a column drum, indicates that the temple was in an advanced state of abandonment at this time, and that part of its marble decoration had already been taken somewhere else. The inscription is datable to the late fifth century, as suggested by its style and the name recorded. Although the full identity of Decius remains uncertain, all possible late antique candidates were very powerful aristocrats from the Ostrogothic period.<sup>137</sup> A similar find refers to the Colosseum. Here, a large travertine block from one of the amphitheatre's arcades was carved with the name of Gerontius, a *vir spectabilis* (*GERONTI VS*), also at the time of Theoderic. The inscribed block is located in one of the inner corridors of the amphitheatre, and its position indicates that the area around it must have undergone extensive destruction by that time. The Colosseum was already under a process of spoliation while still in use.<sup>138</sup> If the interpretation of these inscriptions is correct, this would mean that the spoliation of high-profile monuments in the city centre was already well under way towards the end of our period. This cannot have been carried out without the knowledge and consent of public authorities.

As the examples discussed here show, the city's elite was intimately involved in the supply and spoliation of building materials in late antique Rome. This was not something new. Early imperial senatorial families had frequently invested in brickyards, for example, supplying material to private and public projects in Rome and elsewhere.<sup>139</sup> However, there were fundamental differences between the late antique and earlier periods, with regards to the scale and nature of senatorial involvement in these activities. As imperial legislation shows, late Roman officials and private builders had a much freer hand in the late empire. More importantly, as the evidence available suggests, they were able to pursue their interests at the expense of the *Urbs* itself.

<sup>136</sup> Cass., *Var.* 2.7. See the comments of Fauvinet-Ranson (2006A) 63–5. For examples of Ostrogothic concern with these structures, see Cass., *Var.* 7.13; see also Fauvinet-Ranson (2006B) and Alchermes (1994).

<sup>137</sup> Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996A) 78–80 and (2004) 71. Candidates suggested are *PLRE* II, Basilius 13, and Albinus 9, among others.

<sup>138</sup> See discussion in Rea and Pani (2002); also Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004) 70–1.

<sup>139</sup> Argued by Steinby (1983); see also Manacorda (2005).

### The organization of the workforce

Late antique Rome's building industry was subject to a series of interests that affected all its aspects, from funding to the gathering of materials. The situation was not different in terms of the organization of the actual building works and of the workforce employed; here too aristocrats played an important part. Rome's labour market used to be seen as a system that was run by the state, operating through *collegia* and *corpora*. These were tightly controlled and regulated, being heavily dependent on the imperial administration. Their function was to train and manage the workers of the city, who were legally bound to them.<sup>140</sup> This traditional view exaggerated the extent of state control, while ignoring the role of private builders and of informal labour. This picture was nuanced by A. H. M. Jones, who observed that the relationship between imperial authorities and the workforce changed with the passing of time, and that the type of labour employed varied according to historical circumstances and to the type of work carried out, whether public or private.<sup>141</sup> Whereas private builders hired and organized their own teams of workers, labour employed in public building was connected to the city's various associations. This difference might explain why some specific innovations in building techniques appear in public structures, but not in private buildings: members of corporations were probably better trained and more carefully supervised. As a result, differences in the laying of bricks, the bonding courses of mortar, and types of joints have been observed between these types of structures in late antique Rome.<sup>142</sup>

Even officially commissioned projects could be marked by differences in terms of the building technique, craftsmanship and expertise employed. This can still be seen in the Aurelian Wall, where there was a change in the type of labour employed between the time of Aurelian and later phases. Where specialized workers, probably members of corporations (and therefore well trained) had been employed in the earlier phase, less specialized workers were subsequently employed. This is indicated by the contrast between the carefully laid brick-facing of the Aurelian works and the poorer, hastily built *opus vittatum*—a building technique alternating layers of brick and of small blocks of tufa that became widespread in this period—used in repairs ascribed to Maxentius.<sup>143</sup> These differences probably reflect the varying scale of the works, rather than a general decline in the level of workmanship. In other words, important building projects

<sup>140</sup> As in the fundamental study of Waltzing (1896) 481. See, for a review of previous scholarship, Cracco Ruggini (1971) 59–64.

<sup>141</sup> Jones (1964) 858. See also Cracco Ruggini (1971) 146–93, for associations in general; also Carrié (2002).

<sup>142</sup> See Heres (1982) 53; cf. also Santangeli Valenzani (2007A) 444.

<sup>143</sup> See Cozza (1987) 43–6. But note that the extension of Maxentian works should not be exaggerated: Dey (2011) 42–3.

required a higher degree of organization, engaging corporations and their trained workers. In more general terms, there seems to have been a correspondence between the declining complexity of the organization of the building industry (with its workforce) and the evolution of building techniques in late antiquity, towards much rougher and poorer work.<sup>144</sup> Although difficult to chart, this process seems clear, and was probably related to the reduction in number and magnitude of imperial building projects in the city.

We are relatively well informed about how public works were organized by the end of the fourth century. We know from the imperial letter sent to the urban prefect Sallustius that it was up to the prefect to hire and supervise the work of architects for the construction of the new Basilica of S. Paul.<sup>145</sup> Be it in Rome or in the provinces, architects received a special education, and were responsible for designing building plans and supervising construction works.<sup>146</sup> These specialists enjoyed considerable autonomy, apparently to the point of managing the project's budget concerning day-to-day operations. They were also responsible for dealing with workers, whether organized in corporations or as members of privately contracted teams, as well as for managing the actual construction.

The urban prefect Symmachus offers an insight into the running of building works in his dispatches concerning an enquiry set up following the collapse of a bridge in 384.<sup>147</sup> The architect originally in charge of the work was Cyriades, who was replaced by Auxentius after the disaster. Facing a mutual exchange of accusations of corruption and incompetence, Symmachus sided with Auxentius, and at least one of his *relationes* is mainly concerned with limiting the influence of Cyriades in the enquiries, which Symmachus considered unfair. He had no qualms about interfering in the case at a later date, asking friends to support Auxentius.<sup>148</sup> The reasons for Symmachus' interest and networking are easy to understand: building works were good occasions for the exercise of patronage and influence.

Since Republican times, aristocrats had been active in the organization of labour for the city's building industry. The most famous example was the senator Crassus, who employed five hundred slaves to rebuild the houses he bought after they were destroyed by fire. Other aristocratic families such as the Haterii and the Stiltii remained involved in this activity during the empire.<sup>149</sup> Early imperial Rome's building industry employed a large number of free and freed men, and in a

<sup>144</sup> A point noted, with reference to later periods, by Santangeli Valenzani (2002) 424–5.

<sup>145</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 3. Chastagnol (1960) 349–53 remains essential.

<sup>146</sup> As seen in *Cod. Theod.* 13.4.1 and Cass., *Var.* 7.15.

<sup>147</sup> See Symm., *Relat.* 25–6 (from 384) and *Ep.* 4.70 and 5.76 (from 387). See the analysis of Chastagnol (1960) 349–53 and Le Gall (2005) 372–5. Also Vera (1978).

<sup>148</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 26, curbing Cyriades' influence. Later letters: *Ep.* 4.70, to Eusignius; 5.76, to Licinius. Martinez-Fazio (1972) 335–40 is a good discussion of Symmachus' stand on the whole affair.

<sup>149</sup> For Crassus, see Plut., *Crassus* 2.4; for senatorial involvement, Steinby (1983) 220; Manacorda (2005) 47–8.

society in which the supply of workers far outnumbered the demand, building (and hiring) was a form of establishing patron-client relationships.<sup>150</sup> We cannot know for sure how much this situation changed in late antiquity. Did demographic decline reduce the availability of labour? Or was it compensated by economic slowdown and a corresponding drop in opportunities for work? Whatever the answer to these questions, even the small (by early imperial standards) level of publicly and privately commissioned works represented plenty of occasions for offering jobs and building a network of clients.

This can be seen most clearly in the relationship between aristocrats, especially urban prefects, and professional *collegia*. Professional associations still played an important part in building projects, going beyond the actual construction itself. This is shown by the fact that, when conducting his enquiry into the collapse of the bridge, Symmachus put the leaders of the building *collegia* involved in charge of evaluating the work carried out on the structure.<sup>151</sup> The close connection between officials and associations is well illustrated by the dedication of a statue to a former *curator operum publicorum* (supervisor of public works) in the early fourth century by the college of the *fabri tignarii* (carpenters), 'for the many benefits of his patronage'.<sup>152</sup> The fact that an official who had been responsible for supervising public building was also the patron of the *collegium* in charge of these works was, far from being seen as improper, publicly acknowledged and celebrated with the erection of a statue. It is revealing, in this context, that this is one of the groups mentioned by Symmachus in a petition sent to the emperor in 384, asking him to relieve some of Rome's *collegia* of extra obligations.<sup>153</sup>

Protection and the granting of privileges to individuals and associations were common currency in the relationship between Roman authorities and their subjects. Laws addressed to officials in the provinces warned against the distribution of exemptions from public works, a situation that was similar to the one in Rome. Valentinian III, for example, explicitly ordered that no person should be exempted from work on the walls, towers, and gates of the city.<sup>154</sup> The same was true in the case of prefects and the building industry. Aristocrats were thus able to extend and reinforce the social basis of their power. Organizing the necessary workforce, as well as securing funds for works and arranging building materials were more than just administrative responsibilities of officials and private builders. They represented important opportunities for the exercise of personal

<sup>150</sup> Steinby (1983) 221; cf. also Brunt (1980).

<sup>151</sup> *Rel.* 25.2; also Vera (1981) 189.

<sup>152</sup> *CIL* VI, 1673 = *LSA* 1390: 'multis in se patrociniis co[n]latis', dedicated to L. Aelius Helvius Dionysius, *PUR* in 301–2.

<sup>153</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 14.3. For the role of the urban prefect as responsible for corporations: *Cod. Theod.* 1.10.4. Symmachus, for example, expressed great interest in the *manicipes salinarum*, see *Ep.* 9.103 and 105.

<sup>154</sup> Respectively, *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.5 (to a *vicarius Africae*, from 338) and 15.1.23 (to a praetorian prefect, from 384). For Rome: *Val. III, Nov.* 5.3.

influence and for the appropriation of resources, both of a material and of a more intangible, ideological nature.

### Conclusion: Building as Power

Whether a restoration or a new work, the act of building involved different aspects of city life. It set in motion ideological as well as political and administrative institutions. It required economic resources and influenced the shape of social relations. For a Roman aristocrat, it was a way of presenting himself as patron of the city and leaving a personal mark in the cityscape. It was also a way of being associated with the glories of the 'home of empire and every virtue' (to use Ammianus' words). This was more than just self-representation. It was an actual way of exercising and acquiring power. Building works offered various opportunities for gaining wealth and influence, through more or less illicit dealings and cronyism. They helped aristocrats to extend and consolidate their networks of patronage, providing jobs for workers, granting privileges to friends and clients, and making their influence physically present in the city.

There were important continuities in building practices (including illegal ones) between the late antique and earlier periods. Likewise, many other cities suffered under bad or corrupt managers in late antiquity. However, the extent to which these practices were pursued and the gains at stake in the case of late antique Rome were exceptional. From the late third century onwards the imperial government started a process of unprecedented concentration of powers and responsibilities in the hands of the Roman aristocracy, through the reorganization of the urban prefecture. The role played by *collegia* in construction can be defined, in this context, as that of intermediary agents between powerful builders, workers, and the needs of the city. At the same time, the physical decline of the early imperial urban fabric—be it through natural or man-made catastrophes—required new building and restoration works. Sudden destruction and physical decline represented new (and, in this context, frequent) opportunities for economic, social, and political gain.

Acting in an official capacity, as private patrons, or merely relying on the favour of personal friends, aristocrats of different social and economic standing played a crucial role in the physical definition of the city. Sometimes they operated in a very direct way, as in the case of the forum founded by Sibidius in the Campus Martius. Sometimes they appeared as representatives of the court; even in this case builders still managed to assert their role in the city in a magnificent way, as we saw with the fifth-century restorations of the Colosseum. Rome was their city.

Urban space is not defined by physical structures and political institutions only, but also by the ways in which power operates in its spatial setting. In order to understand how urban space was transformed in late antiquity, we must now

consider the ways in which it was used and defined. The next section will explore this question by focusing on three different but inter-related issues: the transformation of Rome's civic and political centre, the Roman Forum; the role played by ceremonies and celebrations in the ways urban space was experienced; and finally, the redefinition of the city's religious landscape.

PART 2

THE USES OF SPACE





### 3

## Emperors and Senators in the Roman Forum

The same stars which procure for you eternal harmony and the affection of your offspring and your assiduous care for the state promise you in addition to the victories gained throughout the world a naval victory as well, that after the Punic wars, after the kings of Asia and Syria, you adorn the *rostra* of the Roman field with new spoils, and remind the *Quirites*, already forgetful, of why that place revered for its oratory is called the *rostra*.<sup>1</sup>

The closing lines of the panegyric read at Trier for the celebration of Maximian's anniversary in 291 are a good reminder of the powerful impression left by the Forum Romanum and its monuments on the imagination of late antique Romans, no matter how far from the *Urbs* they lived.<sup>2</sup> Maximian reigned in a period of great transformations and dramatic events, and yet his deeds were perceived and advertised in very traditional ways. The Roman Forum, the traditional civic centre of the city, was still part of imperial rhetoric. There is no other place, in the old capital of the empire, where we can see the relationship between urban space and power so clearly. The imperial fora were magnificent monumental complexes in their own right, rich in ideological associations and closely connected with government functions, housing archives and tribunals, for example.<sup>3</sup> And yet, in spite of their continued importance in the late antique period, they could not claim a history as long or as closely connected with the traditional civic institutions as the Forum did.

Just as it had represented the political life and glories of the Roman Republic, the Forum represented the greatness of imperial rule, with equestrian statues and triumphal arches.<sup>4</sup> Scholarship has in recent years paid great attention to the role

<sup>1</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 11(3).19.4–5 (transl. Rodgers).

<sup>2</sup> On the occasion of delivery of this panegyric, see Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 76–9.

<sup>3</sup> Bauer (1996) remains a crucial reference for the imperial fora in late antiquity; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2007) present the most recent excavations, with great attention to late Roman and post-Roman phases. Anderson (1984) collects the literary evidence for the uses of the imperial fora in the early empire.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the history and archaeology of the Forum during the Republic and early empire, see Purcell (1995). Relevant for our discussion, but dealing with the Republic and Augustan periods: Coarelli (1983).

of the traditional centre of Rome as a 'place of memory': past and present were combined in the monuments, rituals, and institutions that were established there, being celebrated in restoration works.<sup>5</sup> By the time of Maximian, the Forum had for centuries been more than just a civic centre. It was an imperial symbol, a fact acknowledged by Ammianus Marcellinus decades later, when he called the speaker's platform, the *rostra*, the 'most famous forum of ancient power'.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the process through which the Forum, still an imperial space at the beginning of our period, was progressively appropriated and redefined by the senatorial aristocracy in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. Late antique Rome was a polycentric city, in the sense that different areas and monumental complexes occupied a highly charged symbolic, political, or economic place in its map. The changes that redefined the *Urbs* during this period led to the development of new spatialities and new centres, a process most visible in terms of its religious (and particularly Christian topography). None of these spaces had the visibility of the Forum, however, whether for contemporaries or for modern scholars. The Forum is the best documented and most intensively studied part of the city, and nowhere else can we find such a wealth of literary texts, inscriptions, and archaeological material that can help us to understand the production and use of urban space. If we are to understand the history of the city in the late antique period, we must take into account the evolution of a space that was, in many ways, its symbolic and political centre. In order to do this, we must first understand the extent to which the Forum was transformed in the late third and early fourth centuries, when significant works were carried out in the area. This was an extremely active space, and its buildings and temples were continuously restored by different officials eager to celebrate imperial power. We will then consider the use of the Forum as a stage for rituals and for political interaction in the second half of the fourth century. These different types of use illustrate how the Roman aristocracy became increasingly associated with the history and identity of this area. This process culminated in the fifth century, a period in which destruction caused by civil conflicts and the inevitable physical decay of its monuments gave senators more room to emphasize their own priorities and interests in shaping the image and use of the Forum.

### The Tetrarchic Forum (AD 283–337)

The late antique history of the Roman Forum begins during the reign of Carinus (283–5), when the area was severely damaged by fire. The extensive destruction of the complex created an opportunity for a massive programme of restorations

<sup>5</sup> See Machado (2006) and Kalas (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.10.13: 'perspectissimum priscae potentiae forum'.

carried out under Diocletian and Maximian (Fig. 3.1).<sup>7</sup> The civic buildings on both sides of the square, the Basilica Iulia on the south and the Basilica Aemilia on the north, were completely rebuilt. Although employing reused material extensively—and therefore making great changes to the decoration—these reconstructions were notably conservative in preserving the original topography of the area. The central square of the Forum was also the subject of important works, of a more innovative character. Seven columns were erected along the southern side, in front of the Basilica Iulia, whereas the eastern short side was closed by the erection of a new speakers' platform, the *rostra* (almost completely demolished in the 1870s; Fig. 3.1: A).<sup>8</sup> An honorific column, later dedicated to the Byzantine emperor Phocas, was erected on top of a large base near the south-western corner of the square (Fig. 3.1: B).<sup>9</sup> Even the old Augustan *rostra* in front of the Senate underwent transformations (Fig. 3.1: C). The pre-existing platform was extended with the addition of a structure made of brick (the so-called *Rostra Vandalica*). The monument was also redecorated, with the erection of five new columns placed on top of bases carved with reliefs celebrating Tetrarchic rule.<sup>10</sup>

Important works were also carried out on the Senate house and the structures adjacent to it. The Curia was completely rebuilt, following the pre-existing Augustan design.<sup>11</sup> The building had a very simple plan (Fig. 3.1: D): a rectangular space with movable seats for senators on both sides, and a platform for the official presiding over the session at the back (usually the *praefectus urbi*). Alfonso Bartoli suggested that there was enough room for the seating of three hundred senators, but seats could be rearranged according to the needs of any session.<sup>12</sup> Behind the platform where the president of the session sat, there was the base of a statue, possibly the famous image of Victory, and other statues were on display in the niches along the side walls.<sup>13</sup> The Life of Claudius (emperor from 268 to 270) in the *Historia Augusta* records that the senators unanimously decided to dedicate a *clipeus* to him in the Curia, and that the emperor's bust remained there in later periods, indicating that the decoration could be adapted to new political circumstances.<sup>14</sup>

The works carried out in the Forum were contemporary with the extensive restoration of the neighbouring Forum of Caesar (Fig. 3.2).<sup>15</sup> The Temple of Venus Genetrix was partially closed off from the main square by the construction

<sup>7</sup> See *Chronographus a. 354* (MGH.AA 9, 148): '...operae publicae arserunt senatum, forum Caesaris, basilicam Iuliam, et Graecostadium'. For the destruction and subsequent works, see Coarelli (1999A).

<sup>8</sup> See Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) for this area in general, and Liverani (2007).

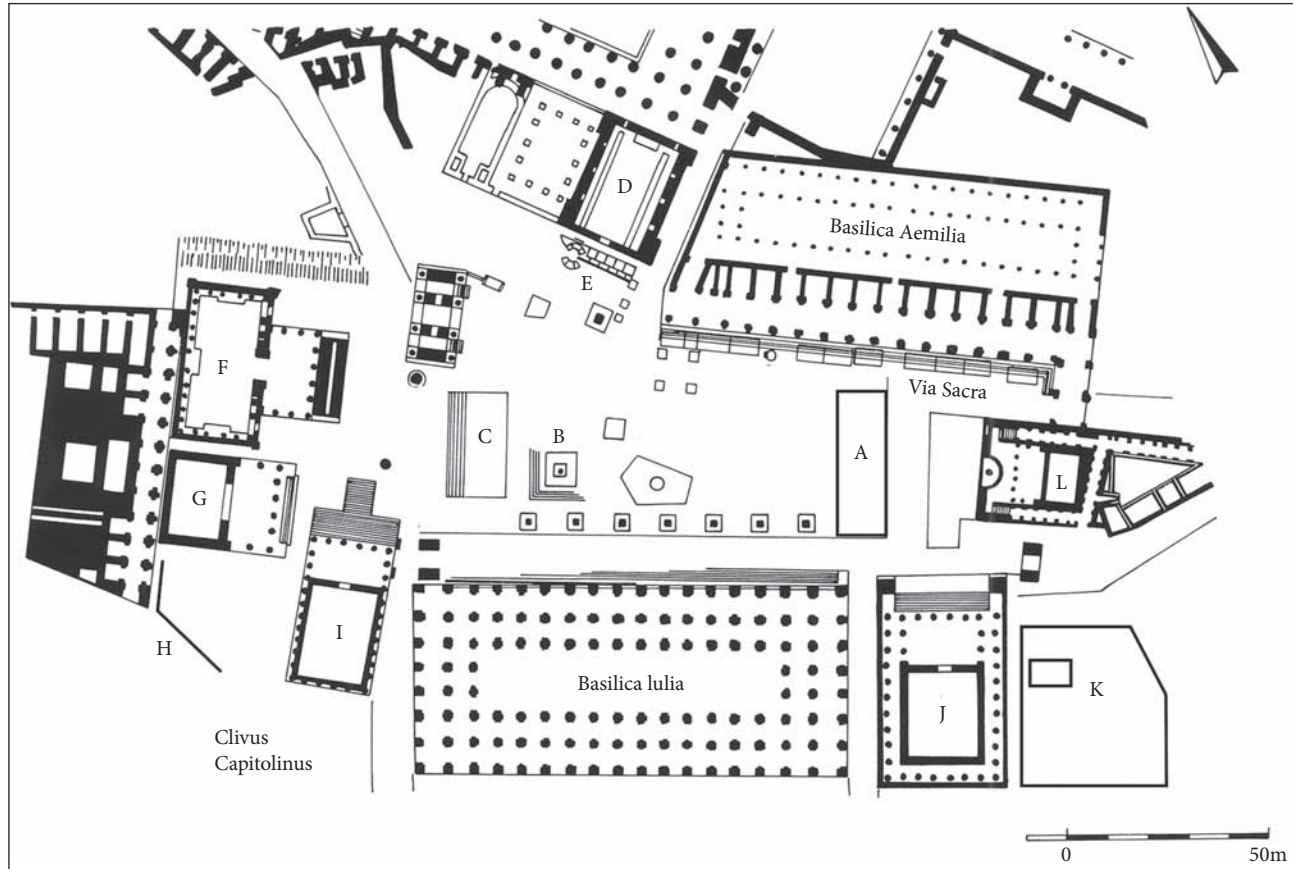
<sup>9</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) 174–7. The inscription recording the dedication to Phocas by Smaragdus refers only to the statue placed on top of the monument (*CIL* VI, 1200 = *LSA* 1313).

<sup>10</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) 70–3; also Coarelli (1999A) 29–30. Liverani (2007) 179 suggests a slightly earlier date, the reign of Claudius (268–70).

<sup>11</sup> See for what follows Bartoli (1963). <sup>12</sup> Bartoli (1963) 54.

<sup>13</sup> Bartoli (1963) 57. <sup>14</sup> *SHA*, Claud. 3.3.

<sup>15</sup> For these works, see Amici (1991) 143–57; for a recent reassessment, see Meneghini (2010). See also Lipps (2008).



**Fig. 3.1.** The Roman Forum in late antiquity.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from K. S. Freyberger, *Das Forum Romanum*, Mainz 2012, Abb. 64, with the author's kind permission.

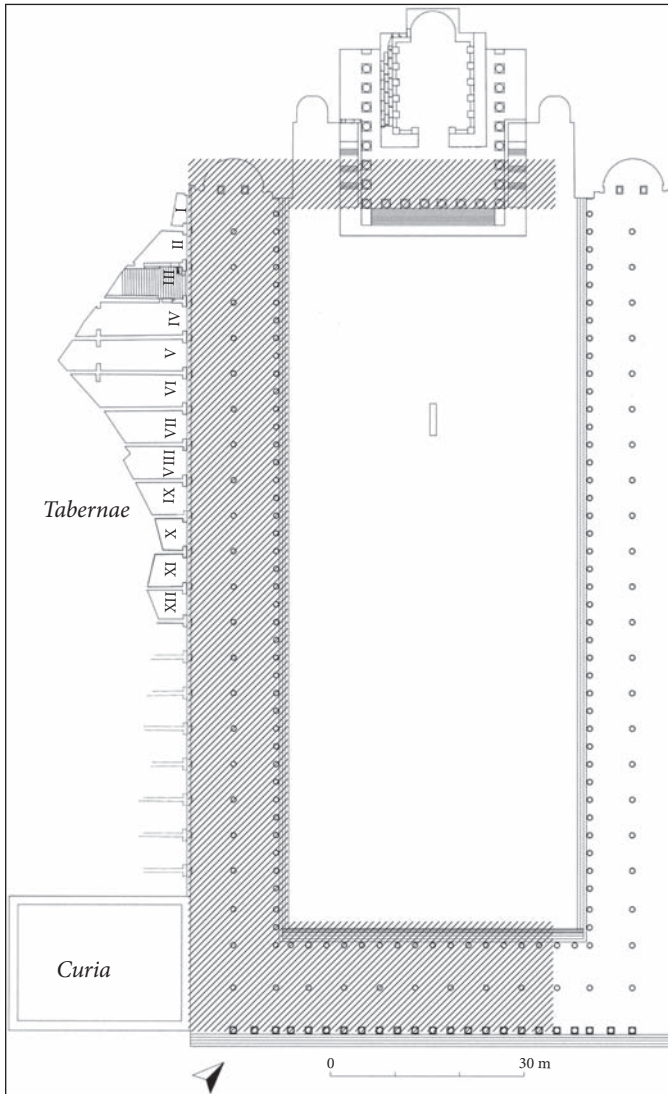


Fig. 3.2. The Forum of Caesar in late antiquity.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from A. Corsaro, A. Delfino, I. de Luca, and R. Meneghini, 'Nuovi dati archeologici per la storia del Foro di Cesare tra la fine del IV e la metà del V secolo', in *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD*, ed. J. Lipps, C. Machado, and P. von Rummel (Palilia 28), Wiesbaden 2013, p. 126 fig. 4, with the authors' kind permission.

of a brick wall that incorporated its frontal colonnade; access to the temple was now gained through two lateral archways. Important transformations were carried out in the southern *porticus*, where a reinforcing brick wall was built attached to the original tufa wall, and faced with marble. The central colonnade of the *porticus*

was removed, and a new pavement was laid. These changes created a new space immediately behind the Curia, connected to it by two doors, convincingly identified as the late antique Atrium Libertatis.<sup>16</sup>

As Nicholas Purcell observed, the beginning of the imperial period had seen a remarkable transformation in the architecture and meaning of the Forum, a 'central public space' that was ordered according to new standards of dignity and decorum, adapted for new forms of display and self-presentation that suited the Augustan regime.<sup>17</sup> The Tetrarchic transformation of the area took these developments even further, turning it into a confined space, ideal for celebratory appearances of emperors visiting the city.<sup>18</sup> The whole complex was charged with important ideological associations. Maxentius dedicated a statue celebrating the 'unconquered Mars, [our] father, and the founders of his eternal city', in front of the Curia. The monument was inaugurated on Rome's anniversary, 21 April (the year is unknown), by the supervisor of sacred buildings (*curator aedium sacrarum*) Furius Octavianus, and the fact that it was preserved in the process of Maxentius' *damnatio memoriae* (only his name was erased) attests to its importance.<sup>19</sup> The advent of the Tetrarchic (and later Constantinian) regime was also marked by the frenzied dedication of imperial statues, confirming to passers-by the strong monarchic character of this space.<sup>20</sup> Officials from different government branches and of various ranks were involved in this process: imperial statues were set up by the Senate, a consul (an equestrian monument), an urban prefect, a praetorian prefect, officers of the fisc, and even officers of an unspecified archive.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the vast majority of these dedications followed the same pattern, subscribing to imperial ideology and celebrating the ruling power.<sup>22</sup> A good example of this is the statue dedicated by Septimius Valentio, an imperial official based in Rome, to the emperor Maximian in 293–6:

To the great and invincible and, above all previous rulers, most powerful emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, pious, fortunate, invincible Augustus, consul for the fourth time, father of the country, proconsul. Septimius

<sup>16</sup> See La Rocca (2001) 180; for the identification of this space, see Fraschetti (1999A) 207–10, who dated it to the fifth century.

<sup>17</sup> Purcell (1995) 336.

<sup>18</sup> e.g. Coarelli (1999A) 32–3.

<sup>19</sup> *CIL* VI, 33856a–b = *LSA* 1388: 'Marti Invicto, patri, / et aeternae urbis suae / conditoribus, / dominus noster / [[Imp(erator) Maxent[iu]s, p(ius), f(elix)]], / invictus Aug(ustus). / Dedicata die(s) XI kal(endas) Maias / per Furium Octavianum v(irum) c(larissimum) / cur(atorem) aed(ium) sacr(arum).' See Cullhed (1994) 61.

<sup>20</sup> See Machado (2006) 166–7.

<sup>21</sup> Senate: *CIL* VI, 40768 = *LSA* 1430 and *CIL* VI, 40764 = *LSA* 1520; Consul: *CIL* VI, 1141 = *LSA* 1263; urban prefect: *CIL* VI, 1128 = 31421 = *LSA* 822; praetorian prefect: *CIL* VI, 40726 = *LSA* 1429; fisc officials: *CIL* VI, 1132 = *LSA* 1259 and *CIL* VI, 36952a = *LSA* 1367; and archive officials: *CIL* VI, 1119 = *LSA* 819 and *CIL* VI, 40722 = *LSA* 1367 (off(iciales) a s(criniis)).

<sup>22</sup> See discussion in Machado (2006) 165–6.

Valentio, of *perfectissimus* rank, representative of the praetorian prefects of *clarissimus* rank, [set this up], devoted to his divine spirit and majesty.<sup>23</sup>

Like the many dedicatory inscriptions in the area, the dedication referred to a variety of titles and virtues—religious, military, and moral—that set the emperor apart from common mortals, even from his predecessors. Commissioners of imperial monuments could choose from a vast repertoire of honorific qualities, emphasizing specific aspects of their ruler's image, whilst at the same time subscribing to the main tenets of imperial ideology. It was this flexibility of epigraphic language that allowed an emperor who was defined in the first place as a member of an imperial college (the Tetrarchy) to be treated as 'most powerful' and 'above all previous rulers'. Valentio was an official of equestrian rank, a deputy of the praetorian prefects who operated in Rome, and his dedication in such a prestigious place must have required approval from his superiors as well as from city authorities.<sup>24</sup> As such, his monument to Maximian illustrates both the diversity of forms in which imperial power could be celebrated as well as the extent to which different sectors of the Roman state were involved in this practice.

The Tetrarchic restoration of the Forum was not limited to the celebration of imperial ideology, however.<sup>25</sup> This was a working space, and these works had an important practical dimension. The Curia was an important focus of activity, as senators from various parts of the empire still gathered there for different types of meetings. There is no reason to assume that the great *basilicae* flanking the Forum had lost their importance as spaces for popular gathering or official use, as confirmed by the number of statues dedicated in their vicinity.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to know, however, whether these structures continued to be used for the same functions as in previous centuries. At the beginning of the second century AD, Pliny the Younger mentioned the convening of judicial courts in the Basilica Iulia, and a few early imperial (undated) epitaphs mention the activity of *nummularii* (money changers) in this same place.<sup>27</sup> The continuity of financial activities seems to be certain, at least, for the Basilica Aemilia, where a large group of coins was excavated and assigned to an early fifth-century destruction level.<sup>28</sup> The discovery

<sup>23</sup> CIL VI, 1125 = LSA 820: 'Magno et Invicto ac / super omnes retro / principes, fortissimo / Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arco) Aur(elio) Valerio / Maximiano, Pio, Fel(ici), / Invicto Aug(usto), co(n)s(uli) IIII, / p(atr)i p(atriciae), proco(n)s(uli). / Septimius Valentio, v(ir) p(erfectissimus), / a (gens) v(icem) praeff(ectorum) praett(orio) cc(larissimorum) vv(irorum), / d(evotus) n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue) eius.'

<sup>24</sup> See PLRE I, Valentio; on his post, Porena (2003) 139–40.

<sup>25</sup> The importance of ideological elements is demonstrated by Coarelli (1999A) and especially Kalas (2015) 23–45.

<sup>26</sup> For the Basilica Aemilia see, for example, CIL VI, 40764 = LSA 1520, CIL VI, 36948 = EDR 115018, CIL VI, 1119 = LSA 819, and CIL VI, 40722 = LSA 1381. For the Basilica Iulia, see CIL VI, 1128 = LSA 822, CIL VI, 1220 = 33857b = LSA 1387, and CIL VI, 1127 = LSA 821.

<sup>27</sup> See Pliny, Ep. 2.14; 4.16; 5.9. For the *nummularii de Basilica Iulia* see CIL VI, 9709 (with 9710), 9711, and 9712.

<sup>28</sup> As discussed below. For earlier periods, see Freyberger et al. (2007) 523–4.

of two statue bases dedicated by supervisors of the aqueducts and of the (Porticus) Minucia (*curatores aquarum et Miniciae*) in the area of the shrine and fountain of Iuturna (Fig. 3.1: K) suggests that this monument was connected to the Statio Aquarum, the office related to the care and administration of aqueducts.<sup>29</sup> One of the dedications, in fact, affirms that the statue was dedicated together with an unnamed office space, reinforcing the link between this part of the Forum and the administration of the aqueducts.<sup>30</sup> Whilst imperial power was celebrated in monuments and inscriptions, the area remained an active working space, connected to the administration and political life of the city.

### Restorations, Rituals, and Politics (AD 337–410)

The decidedly imperial character of the Forum started to change in the second half of the fourth century, as members of the local elite began to assert their own priorities in the area. The dominant position of emperors was never questioned: Rome's civic centre played an important role in the relationship between emperors, senators, and the city throughout late antiquity.<sup>31</sup> There was a continuous dialogue between the (rare) imperial visits and the local officials who refurbished the area in response to the political priorities of the court. Ammianus' narrative of Constantius II's visit to this area in 357 highlighted the moment when, from the *rostra*, he admired the monuments that had been restored only a few decades earlier.<sup>32</sup> Standing on the Augustan platform, the emperor would have seen a series of statues dedicated to himself, slightly to his left, in the area around the Comitium (Fig. 3.1: E). Naeratus Cerealis had dedicated an equestrian statue when urban prefect in 352, and Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, prefect at the time of the emperor's arrival, erected three statues celebrating the emperor with one of his favourite titles, 'victorious over the whole world'.<sup>33</sup>

The celebration of imperial power cannot be isolated from its concrete historical context, however, and it is only when we take this into account that we are able to appreciate the complex political dialogue taking place in the area. Constantius' visit was directly linked to the defeat of the usurpation of Magnentius (350–3) and the seizure of power by Nepotianus, a descendant of Constantine whose rule did not extend beyond Rome and only lasted for twenty-eight days.<sup>34</sup> Members of the

<sup>29</sup> *CIL* VI, 31513 = 40771 = *LSA* 1500 and *CIL* VI, 36951 = *LSA* 1366. See Boni (1901) for a description of the finds, with p. 129 for the statue-bases.

<sup>30</sup> See *CIL* VI, 36951 = *LSA* 1366: 'dedicata cum statione'; also Bruun (1989).

<sup>31</sup> An issue explored by Humphries (2003).

<sup>32</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 16.10.13.

<sup>33</sup> See *CIL* VI, 1158 = *LSA* 838 (Cerealis), and *CIL* VI, 1161 = *LSA* 1278, *CIL* VI, 1162 = *LSA* 1279, and *CIL* VI, 31395 = *LSA* 1360: 'toto orbe victor' (Orfitus). For the context of the dedications and choice of titles, see Humphries (2003) 38–40.

<sup>34</sup> See, for the usurpations of Magnentius and Nepotianus in Rome, Humphries (2015) 158–60; see also Lizzi Testa (2004) 42–9.



aristocracy were inevitably involved in these events, particularly in the support of Magnentius. Two prominent senators, Fabius Titianus and Lucius Aradius Valerius Proculus, former bulwarks of the Constantinian regime, occupied the prefecture for a second time under the usurper.<sup>35</sup> Titianus dedicated at least two statues to the new ruler in different parts of the city, celebrating him as 'the expander of the Roman world and state', but the inscribed dedications were erased after Magnentius' defeat.<sup>36</sup> No trace of Roman support for the usurper survived in the Forum. However, the reference to Constantius II as 'exterminator of the pestilential usurpation' in the dedication of the equestrian statue that was set up in his honour next to the Curia, immediately after the recapture of the city (352–3), is a clear reminder of the recent upheavals and rivalries that divided the Roman elite.<sup>37</sup>

Emperors continued to be celebrated in a grandiloquent manner in the later decades of the fourth century. Of all the monuments honouring emperors in the post-Constantinian period, the most important was erected at the other, eastern end of the Forum. A long (3.43 m) marble architrave found near the Diocletianic *rostra* was carved with an inscription recording the dedication of a structure to Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius by the urban prefect Lucius Valerius Septimius Bassus in 379/383.<sup>38</sup> Another inscription, with the name of the same prefect, was found nearby (between the temple of Castor and Pollux and the shrine of Vesta). It was also carved into an architrave with the same decorative style, and probably belonged to the same monument.<sup>39</sup> The size of the first architrave and its place of discovery suggest that it was located on top of the eastern *rostra* (Fig. 3.1:A), serving as a monumental entrance to the speakers' platform at that end of the Forum. Bronze statues representing the emperors were placed on top of the monument, as indicated by dowel holes on the upper part of the architrave, providing the area with a splendid setting for imperial appearances. And yet, in spite of the continued importance of emperors in late antique Rome's political life, the newly refurbished *rostra* were to be the last great imperial monument erected in this part of the city, as different priorities gained prominence from the middle of the fourth century onwards.

### Temples and the ritualization of power

The temples of the Forum played a crucial role in the definition of the area as a central place. Roman aristocrats were actively involved in the preservation of these

<sup>35</sup> Titianus was prefect for the second time in 350–1 (*PLRE* I, Titianus 6), and Proculus in 351–2 (*PLRE* I, Proculus 11).

<sup>36</sup> *CIL* VI, 1166a = *LSA* 1281 and *CIL* VI, 1167 = *LSA* 1284: 'Propagatori orbis ac Romanae rei'.

<sup>37</sup> *CIL* VI, 1158 = *LSA* 838: 'extinctori pestiferae tyrannidis'.

<sup>38</sup> *CIL* VI, 1184a = *LSA* 1294 for the inscription. The architrave was reused: see Pensabene (1999) 763. For this monument and what follows, see Bauer (1999).

<sup>39</sup> *CIL* VI, 37132 = *EDR* 071884; see Bauer (1999) 228–9.

structures, be it for their religious significance or for their prominent place in the city's topography of power. The temples of the Forum were intimately connected with Rome's oldest traditions, autonomous from the monuments and spaces that celebrated generations of imperial rulers in that same area. It was by association with these structures that aristocrats were able to emphasize an alternative, non-imperial image of the *forum Romanum*. It is worth, in this case, to analyse the ways in which temples were physically redefined and incorporated into senatorial strategies for the display of power in the second half of the fourth century.

In 367, the urban prefect Vettius Agorius Praetextatus restored the *porticus* of the *Dei Consentes* and its statues, as an inscription found in the area records (Fig. 3.1: H): 'Vettius Praetextatus, of *clarissimus* rank, prefect of the city, restored the most holy statues of the harmonious gods, with every embellishment of the entire place, carefully repaired to its ancient condition. Under the supervision of Longeius..., of *clarissimus* and *consularis* rank'.<sup>40</sup> The restoration employed reused materials, including columns, architraves, and capitals, which were reworked in order to create a uniform appearance.<sup>41</sup> The statues do not survive, but the phrasing of the inscription, celebrating the restoration of the *sacrosancta simulacra*, makes the religious character of this work clear. The adjective *sacro-sanctus* was rarely used in Latin literature and epigraphy until the fourth century, when it began to appear in Christian and legal texts with reference to the Church.<sup>42</sup> The choice of this term reveals Praetextatus' view of his works, also emphasized by the reference to the statues of the gods as *simulacra*, a term traditionally reserved for statues of a religious nature.<sup>43</sup> Praetextatus had been proconsul of Achaia in 362–4, where he was involved in the defence of pagan rituals.<sup>44</sup> The altar of the twelve gods in the agora in Athens must have been an important influence for his work in Rome. The reference to the restoration of the statues to their original condition suggests that these were gilded statues, a striking sight for pagans and Christians alike.<sup>45</sup>

In the same area, just across the Clivus Capitolinus, the Temple of Saturn (Fig. 3.1: I) was also the object of restoration, celebrated in an inscription on its architrave: 'The Senate and Roman people restored [the temple] destroyed by fire'.<sup>46</sup> The new decoration of the temple consisted of reused marble blocks and granite columns (pink and grey). The builders went to the trouble of producing

<sup>40</sup> CIL VI, 102 = LSA 1503: '[Deorum C]onsentium sacrosancta simulacra, cum omni lo[ci totius adornatio]ne cultu in f[ormam antiquam restituit], / [V]ettius Praetextatus, v[ir] c[larissimus], praefectus urbi, [reposit]. / Curante Longeio [---, v[ir]o c[larissimo], c[onsul]ari]'. For these works and what follows, see Machado (2009) 344–8.

<sup>41</sup> See Pensabene (2015) 171–4.

<sup>42</sup> As shown by Bruggisser (2012) 334–43.

<sup>43</sup> As observed by Stewart (2003) 21–2; also Estienne (1997) 83.

<sup>44</sup> See PLRE I, Praetextatus 1 for his career and dates. *Cod. Theod.* 9.16.7 (364), allowing nocturnal sacrifices, was addressed to him as proconsul. For this law, see Lizzi Testa (2004) 251–2.

<sup>45</sup> On the statues at an earlier date, see Varro, *De re rust.* 1.1.4.

<sup>46</sup> CIL VI, 937 = EDR 105657: 'Senatus populusque Romanus / incendio consumptum restituit'. The fundamental work on this monument is Pensabene (1984).

ionic capitals, preserving as best they could the style of decoration of the earlier building.<sup>47</sup> Taking into account the inscription, the remains of the complex, and the style of its decoration, Patrizio Pensabene suggested that these works took place at some point between 360 and 390.<sup>48</sup> The *porticus* of the *Dei Consentes* and the temple of Saturn had traditionally been connected to the city treasury, the *Aerarium Saturni*. The *aerarium* was located in the temple, and it has been suggested that the *tabernae* behind the *porticus* served as offices for its administration.<sup>49</sup> The treasury lost importance during the fourth century, being progressively identified as a municipal treasury, and the once prestigious position of *praefectus aerarii Saturni* disappeared.<sup>50</sup> The restorations could therefore have been carried out at a time when these structures had lost part of their functions. This was not necessarily a contradiction. The temple remained an important cultural and historical symbol. The poet Macrobius, in the fifth century, had the main characters of his *Saturnalia* discuss the origins of the temple, its decoration, and its connection with the *aerarium*.<sup>51</sup> Antiquarianism was an important element in late Roman aristocratic culture, and the monuments and temples of the *Urbs* were an important source of pride and prestige.<sup>52</sup>

The late fourth century is also the most likely context for the restoration of the temple of *Concordia*, on the same side of the Forum (Fig. 3.1: F). An inscription, copied in the early Middle Ages, states that the temple was restored by the Senate, 'with effort and care, after collapsing due to old age, to a better and more splendid state'.<sup>53</sup> The *aedes Concordiae* had played an important part in the political and religious life of the city until at least the third century, as a meeting space for the Senate and for the college of the *fratres Arvales*.<sup>54</sup> The author of the *Historia Augusta* preserved the memory of this type of use, placing important (and certainly fictional) meetings of senators in this temple, to honour and even to choose emperors.<sup>55</sup> Excavations carried out in 1817 revealed part of the architrave, votive bases, fragments of colossal statues, and remnants of coloured marble (from the pavement and from the wall revetment). The quality of the material and its workmanship indicate that they were produced at an early imperial date.<sup>56</sup> If this is correct, the works celebrated in the inscription must have been superficial, and it is possible that the Senate as an institution was more interested in celebrating its role in the preservation of the Forum than in protecting pagan structures as such.

<sup>47</sup> Pensabene (1984) 66–70 and (1999) 768.

<sup>48</sup> Pensabene (1984) 152 and (1999) 768.

<sup>49</sup> For the Temple of Saturn, see discussion in Corbier (1974), and for the *porticus* Pensabene (1984) 80.

<sup>50</sup> Process analyzed by Corbier (1974) 719–20.

<sup>51</sup> Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.8.1–3.

<sup>52</sup> Machado (2009) 346–7.

<sup>53</sup> *CIL* VI, 89 = *EDR* 161224: 'S(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) R(omanus) / aedem Concordiae vetustate conlapsam / in meliorem faciem opere et cultu splendidiore restituit'. See also Bauer (1996) 27.

<sup>54</sup> References in Ferroni (1993) 319.

<sup>55</sup> As seen in the Introduction, pp. 17–18.

<sup>56</sup> A description of the finds was made by Nibby (1819) 140–1. Most of this material has disappeared since, but at least some of it was still visible in the late 1800s: Middleton (1888) 210–11.

Information is considerably more problematic in the case of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, on the south-eastern corner of the Forum, but here too important changes seem to have taken place (Fig. 3.1: J). Archaeological evidence shows that the structure was already undergoing physical decay in the first decades of the fourth century. The podium facing the Basilica Iulia was badly damaged at the beginning of the century, perhaps by the fire of 283. Small bronze coins datable to that period were found in the clamp holes of the podium's tufa blocks.<sup>57</sup> The discovery of these coins also indicates that the temple was left at least partly unrestored after that date.<sup>58</sup> Further evidence of late antique destruction was discovered in the area near the shrine of *Iuturna*, where pieces of the temple's marble decoration were found reused in a late antique wall (of uncertain date).<sup>59</sup> However, the temple remained an imposing structure. Most of its decoration was still *in situ*, and parts of the *cella*'s pavement were still visible in the late nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Three of the temple's columns are still standing, suggesting that, even partially damaged, it could still serve as a physical reminder of the twin deities and their legendary role at a time of military crisis—themes that would still appear in imperial panegyrics as late as the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>61</sup>

As the excavation of the shrine of *Iuturna* shows, the area around the Temple of Castor and Pollux was not abandoned in late antiquity.<sup>62</sup> The very fact that an imperial monument was dedicated on top of the eastern *rostra* in that same area suggests that late Romans still valued this part of the Forum. References in the *Historia Augusta* confirm that memory of the political significance of the temple, especially as a venue for senatorial meetings, was still alive among late antique Romans.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the mid-fourth-century calendar of Filocalus suggests that the *transvectio equitum*, a procession involving the performance of rituals in front of the temple, was still taking place annually on 15 July.<sup>64</sup> The urban prefect Tertullus made sacrifices in the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Ostia (in 359), and celebrations associated with the Ostian temple continued during the fifth century, and possibly later. These festivals took place on 27 January, on the same date that Tiberius dedicated the temple in Rome.<sup>65</sup> Although partially damaged and never

<sup>57</sup> Mentioned by Vaglieri (1903) 165; see also Tea (1953) 147.

<sup>58</sup> For the excavation of the area, see Sande (1992).

<sup>59</sup> Sande (1992) 9 n. 2. Vaglieri (1903) 165 observed that the marble decoration found directly on the ancient pavement of the area surrounding the temple could also be evidence of early decay.

<sup>60</sup> See Lanciani (1897) 273 and especially Sande (1992). The podium's travertine was still in place at different points of the structure. See also the description in Middleton (1888) 174–8.

<sup>61</sup> See *Pan. Lat.* 4(10).15.4–7 (read for Constantine) and Claudian, *De IV cos. Hon.* 203–11 (for Honorius).

<sup>62</sup> See the evidence presented in Boni (1901); the area would be Christianized at a later date, with the creation of S. Maria Antiqua: see Bauer (1996) 66–8.

<sup>63</sup> *SHA*, Max. 16.1 and Val. 5.4.

<sup>64</sup> For the *transvectio equitum*, see the *Fasti Filocali* (*InscrIt* 13.2, p. 251). July 15 was the date recorded by Livy for the dedication of the temple. For use of the temple in senatorial meetings, see *SHA*, Maxim. 16.1 and Valer. 5.4. See also the considerations of Salzman (1990) 153–7.

<sup>65</sup> See *Amm. Marc.* 19.10.4 for Tertullus; for games in Ostia in the fifth century, see the *Fasti Polemii Silvii* (*InscrIt* 13.2, p. 264); for a later reference, see *Ps-Aeth., Cosmog.* (ed. Riese, p. 83).

restored, the Temple of Castor and Pollux remained an important *locus* of ritual memory throughout the late antique period.

The fact that a monument like the Aedes Castoris might have been left partially damaged should not surprise us. Restoring temples was not an easy political decision. Although public support for pagan cults was not officially withdrawn until the 380s, paganism had already been a controversial issue in government circles since at least the mid-fourth century.<sup>66</sup> And yet, the physical preservation of temples remained a source of imperial concern. Constantius II and Constans addressed a law to the urban prefect Catullinus in 342, warning against the spoliation of temples in the suburbs, because they were ritually related to the ceremonies and spectacles that still took place in the city.<sup>67</sup> Imperial edicts addressed to authorities in Rome, emphasizing the need to restore older structures and threatening with punishment officials who started new building projects, might be better understood in this context. As Rita Lizzi Testa observed, two out of the three relevant edicts preserved in the *Theodosian Code* were addressed to pagan prefects of the city, probably at their request.<sup>68</sup> The third edict was issued by Gratian in 376, a time of *rapprochement* between the court and the Roman elite, and addressed to the Senate, probably also in response to a petition from a pagan prefect—Aradius Rufinus.<sup>69</sup> Pagan authorities were keen on protecting Rome's traditional religious infrastructure, and the temples in the Forum indicate how successful they could be. It is not a coincidence that the biographies collected in the *Historia Augusta* refer to important (and fictitious) meetings of senators in the Temples of Concord and of the Dioscuri, as we saw in the Introduction. The restoration of the *porticus* of the *Dei Consentes* and of the Temples of Saturn and Concord by members of the aristocracy was a product of a late fourth-century concern with the city's monumental heritage, of which pagan temples remained a splendid component. A committed pagan, such as Praetextatus, could thus emphasize the religious meaning of his works in the Forum, but this was not considered a threat by the Christian senators who also frequented the Curia and looked after their city's political and historic centre.

The temples in the Forum were part of the city's ritual life, playing a prominent role in the ways in which power was exercised and advertised. In a letter to his aristocratic friend Marcella, Jerome compared the fate of a Christian lady, Lea, to that of the pagan senator Praetextatus, both of whom had recently passed away.<sup>70</sup> Just a few days before his death, Praetextatus had 'ascended to the summit of the Capitol, preceded by the insignia of the highest magistracies, almost as a triumphant general who had defeated his enemies, to the applause and celebration

<sup>66</sup> See Curran (2000) 186 for discussion of the religious context. See also the analysis of Lizzi (2001).

<sup>67</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.3.

<sup>68</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.11 (364), to Symmachus the Elder, and 15.1.27 (390), to Albinus. See Lizzi (2001) 671–4.

<sup>69</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.19; on Rufinus, see *PLRE* I, Rufinus 11.

<sup>70</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 23.3.

of the Roman people'.<sup>71</sup> This was a celebration of striking political and religious traditionalism. Its official character was emphasized by the reference to the *dignitatum omnium culmina praecedebant* and by its location, the Clivus Capitolinus—the road leading to the temple of Jupiter—flanked by the recently restored temples. As we will see in Chapter 5, traditional pagan processions remained a key element in senatorial strategies for displaying their personal piety as much as their social standing; the road to the Capitol was, in this sense, a very prestigious setting for this type of celebration. Although hotly contested, the Capitol was still interpreted by many as a symbol of the *Urbs* and of empire.<sup>72</sup>

From the reign of Constantine onwards, emperors refused to climb the Capitol to sacrifice at the Temple of *Jupiter Capitolinus* as part of their triumphal processions.<sup>73</sup> As Augusto Frascchetti observed, over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, emperors adopted new processional routes for their entrance to the city, shifting their focus from the old pagan centre to spaces associated with the new religion—especially the Basilica of S. Peter.<sup>74</sup> The imperial court in Milan and the local aristocracy had different priorities, however, as well as a different relationship with the history and topography of the city. The late fourth-century biography of the emperor Heliogabalus, in the *Historia Augusta*, suggests that not everyone considered the imperial abandonment of the Capitol a positive innovation. When the emperor refused to ascend to the summit as a new consul, on the Kalends of January, he was replaced by the urban praetor, who made the vows for the state and conducted the traditional ceremonies.<sup>75</sup> The falsifications of the *Historia Augusta* are all the more relevant in this context, as they confirm the ideological importance of the rites celebrated on the Capitol for its intended audience, the senatorial aristocracy. The Christian writer Prudentius also referred to this conservatism, when expressing his shock before the idea of an old aristocrat who still paid respect to such rites on the Capitol:

After having worn the state robe, held the ivory eagle, and sat on the curule chair, the bearded old man inclines his face and imprints kisses on the legs of horses of bronze feet, if it is possible to believe, and adorns with wreaths of roses and smokes with incense the immobile wheels and reins [of the image of the Sun god riding a chariot].<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Ep.* 23.3: '...dignitatum omnium culmina praecedebant, qui quasi de subiectis hostibus triumpharet Capitolinas ascendit arces, quem plausu quodam et tripudio populus Romanus exceperit'.

<sup>72</sup> Discussion in Grig (2009).

<sup>73</sup> See Frascchetti (1999A) 9–31. See now Moralee (2018) 37–42.

<sup>74</sup> Frascchetti (1999C); this process was reexamined more recently in Moralee (2018) 51–5.

<sup>75</sup> *SHA, Heliogab.* 15.5–7. See Frascchetti (1999A) 31–42 for the comparison between Heliogabalus and Constantine in late sources.

<sup>76</sup> Prud., *C. Symm.* 1.349–53: 'Post trabeas et eburnam aquilam sellamque curulem cernuat ora senex barbatus et oscula figit cruribus aenipedum, si fas est credere, equorum, inmotas rotas et flecti nescia lora aut ornat redimita rosis aut ture vaporat'.

Emperors still exerted considerable influence in shaping the spaces of the Forum, and not only through their visits and celebrations. The controversy surrounding the removal of the altar dedicated to the goddess Victory in the Curia is a good case in point. Dedicated by Augustus in 29 BC with a statue of the goddess, the altar was used by senators to offer libations and to make oaths of loyalty on the accession of emperors. Constantius II removed the altar from the Senate house, but it was soon restored to its original location by an unnamed emperor (probably Julian). The altar was removed once again by Gratian (the statue remained), and the responses to this decision—known to us through the writings of Symmachus and Ambrose, bishop of Milan—are a good indication of its symbolic implications.<sup>77</sup> Symmachus, when prefect of the city in 384, addressed a petition to the imperial court at Milan, requesting that the altar be returned to the Senate house as a symbol of religious tolerance but also as a focus of the Senate's loyalty to the court.<sup>78</sup> Ambrose replied to Symmachus' *Relatio* not once but twice (the first time before seeing the original letter), arguing that it would be impious of the emperor to restore it, and his opinion eventually prevailed; the altar was temporarily restored during the usurpation of Eugenius.<sup>79</sup> The controversy over the altar of Victory has attracted a great deal of debate, not only because of its significance for our understanding of the relationship between Christianity and paganism in the late fourth century, but also because of the prestigious contenders involved and the arguments put forward in their letters.<sup>80</sup> In any case, it illustrates the fact that even distant emperors still exerted considerable influence over the definition of Rome's civic centre.

Religious sympathies apart, both Christians and pagans used the Roman Forum for ritual displays of power. A good example of this is the inauguration of the consulship of the (Christian) brothers Probinus and Olybrius, in 395. In the words of their panegyrist, 'the harmonious brothers, joined and held together by a thronging Senate, entered the Forum holding in the distance the *fascēs* that beamed, carried from the threshold [i.e. from their house]'.<sup>81</sup> The Forum remained a central space where aristocrats publicised their standing and celebrated their achievements in late antique Rome, parading through the *Sacra Via* towards the Curia—or to the Capitol, in the case of Praetextatus. The restoration of temples in this area was part of a political strategy that emphasized the symbolic meaning of the old city centre, while associating it with the senatorial elite.

<sup>77</sup> See Lizzi Testa (2007) for a review of the bibliography and analysis of the issue.

<sup>78</sup> The third *Relatio* of Symmachus has been dissected by numerous scholars. See, for discussion and detailed commentary, Vera (1981) 12–53. On Symmachus and the altar, see more recently Sogno (2006) 45–51.

<sup>79</sup> See Amb., *Ep.* 72 (Maur. 17) and 73 (Maur. 18); *Ep. extra coll.* 10 (Maur. 57) for the letter to Eugenius. See Liebeschuetz (2005) 61–94 and 255–61; McLynn (1994) 166–7.

<sup>80</sup> See, for contrasting views, Lizzi Testa (2007) and Cameron (2011) 33–51.

<sup>81</sup> Claudian, *Pan. Prob. et Olyb. cos.* 231–3: 'unanimos fratres iuncto stipante senatu ire forum strictasque procul radiare secures atque uno biiuges tolli de limine fascēs'.

By restoring monuments related to the history and to the ritual calendar of the city, aristocrats chose to do it in a way that was specific to Rome.

Senatorial conservatism is also illustrated by a large number of statue bases discovered in the Forum, bearing inscriptions that record the name and function of the official responsible for the dedication, usually followed by the verb *curavit* (or equivalent).<sup>82</sup> Others give more information, mentioning the desire to embellish a specific area, or the restoration of a statue: 'Gabinus Vettius Probianus, of clarissimus rank, prefect of the City, added this statue as an embellishment to the Basilica Iulia, that he himself had restored anew'.<sup>83</sup> Differently from honorific dedications, these inscriptions do not mention the subject represented in the sculpture, a fact that has led scholars to identify them as statues appreciated for their aesthetic value, in spite of possible pagan associations.<sup>84</sup> This practice was particularly common in late antique Rome, and the largest concentration of this type of dedication was found in the Forum—more than anywhere else in the empire.<sup>85</sup> Most of these dedications were part of two distinct sculptural 'programmes', the first carried out by Fabius Titianus (urban prefect in 339–41) and the second by Gabinus Vettius Probianus (377).<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, these dedications were concentrated in specific areas: along the Sacra Via (especially between the so-called Temple of Romulus and the entrance to the Forum), in front of the Curia, and near the Basilica Iulia.<sup>87</sup> These were areas of great ceremonial and political significance, much frequented spaces (to quote the language of the inscriptions), and the setting up of prestigious works of art added to their splendour.

### Political spaces

The centrality of the Forum was not due to its symbolic or historic significance only, but also to its importance as a space for meetings, political activities, and for the interaction between the local elite and the court. Late Roman emperors also

<sup>82</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 31880 = *LSA* 1337: 'Fabius Titianu[s, v(ir) c(larissimus)], / consul, / praef(ectus) urbi, / curavit'.

<sup>83</sup> *CIL* VI, 1156b = 1658c = *LSA* 1277: 'Gabinus Vettius / Probianus, v(ir) c(larissimus), praef(ectus) urbi, / statum quae basili/cae Iuliae a se noviter / reparatae ornamento / esset adiecit'; see also *CIL* VI, 1658d = *LSA* 1342; and *CIL* VI, 31886 = *LSA* 1362 (both with the same inscription).

<sup>84</sup> Discussed by Lepelley (1994) and Curran (1994).

<sup>85</sup> See Machado (2006) 179–85.

<sup>86</sup> For Titianus, see *PLRE* I, Titianus 6; for Probianus, see Machado (2006) 170–1.

<sup>87</sup> Near Curia: *CIL* VI, 37107 = *LSA* 1333 (Titianus), *CIL* VI, 1658b = *LSA* 1341 and *CIL* VI, 41337 = *LSA* 1433 (Probianus); Basilica Iulia: *CIL* VI, 1156b = 1658c = *LSA* 1277, *CIL* VI, 1658d = *LSA* 1342, *CIL* VI, 31886 = 37105 = *LSA* 1362 (all by Probianus); Sacra Via: *CIL* VI, 3864a = 31883 = *LSA* 1358, and *CIL* VI, 3864b = 31884 = *LSA* 1359 (Probianus), as well as *CIL* VI, 1653a = *LSA* 1328, *CIL* VI, 1653b = *LSA* 1329, *CIL* VI, 1653c = 31879 = *LSA* 1330, *CIL* VI, 31880 = *LSA* 1331, and *CIL* VI, 37108 = *LSA* 1334 (all by Titianus). *CIL* VI, 31881 = *LSA* 1332 (Titianus) probably also came from the Forum, but its precise find spot remains unknown.



used the ancient centre of Rome as a stage for the display of power, and their visits to the city were important political events. The Senate house played an important role on these occasions. Just as Constantius II had done decades earlier, Theodosius I also addressed the people from the *rostra* and the senators in the Curia in 389. It was in the Senate that the Gallic orator Pacatus read his panegyric to this emperor, and we know that Roman senators did the same in the days that followed.<sup>88</sup> Theodosius visited the Senate house on another occasion, after the defeat of Eugenius and his supporters in 394, when according to Prudentius he took the opportunity to urge the senators to abandon the ancient cults.<sup>89</sup> His son and successor, Honorius, also visited the Senate on the occasion of his sixth consulship (404). There, according to Claudian, he presided over the session, giving the senators the opportunity to meet him.<sup>90</sup> Imperial visits were ceremonial occasions that also served as opportunities for Roman senators and their distant rulers to reinforce their political bonds.

The Curia was the *locus* and symbol of senatorial identity, representing the senatorial elite as a group, as well as its institutional role in the late empire. This explains why Symmachus referred to the altar of Victory, in 384, as ‘holding together the harmony of all’.<sup>91</sup> For an aristocrat like the pagan prefect, being a senator meant taking an active part in the life of the Senate, and this included being in Rome and attending meetings whenever possible.<sup>92</sup> Not all senators were as committed as Symmachus, and some of his personal letters consisted of criticism of those who did not fulfil their duties.<sup>93</sup> Imperial legislation tried to ensure that senators living in the provinces would spend some time (and resources) in Rome, frequenting the Senate house.<sup>94</sup> On at least one occasion, a senatorial meeting had to be postponed to give senators in the city and suburbs enough time to assemble, in order to ensure the maximum number of participants in the meeting.<sup>95</sup>

The senatorial complex was a space where information between the court and the Roman elite was exchanged. In the case of Rome, imperial decisions were made known through the letters and edicts addressed to the Senate, sometimes displayed in the spaces adjoining it, such as the Atrium Minervae—the *porticus* that fronted the building.<sup>96</sup> In the case of the imperial court, news arrived through

<sup>88</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).1.3–4 (Pacatus reads in the Senate house) and 2(12).47.3–4 (other senators will address the emperors in the following days).

<sup>89</sup> Theodosius in Rome: Seeck (1919) 284; in the Senate house: Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* 73–6 and Prud., *C. Symm.* 1.544–77.

<sup>90</sup> Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* 587–604. On the visit: Cameron (1970) 385–6.

<sup>91</sup> *Relat.* 3.5: ‘concordiam tenet omnium’.

<sup>92</sup> e.g. *Ep.* 2.57; 7.21; and 7.38.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, *Ep.* 4.18 (criticizing a friend who would rather remain in the countryside) and 9.126 (senators who did not organize games).

<sup>94</sup> e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 6.4.3–4 and 6.4.7 (datable to 354). See also De Francisci (1946–7) 276–8. The situation was similar in Constantinople: *Cod. Theod.* 6.4.9.

<sup>95</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 2.57: scholars have suggested either 376 or 383 as a likely date; see Callu (1972) 237 n. 3.

<sup>96</sup> *Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum collatio* 5.3, from 390 (partially reproduced in *Cod. Theod.* 9.7.6, posted in the forum of Trajan). See De Francisci (1946–7) 284 n. 48 for this law, and Fraschetti

the *acta senatus*, monthly reports narrating the activities of the Senate.<sup>97</sup> The Senate house was also an important space for the regulation of city life. A variety of documents attests to the involvement of the Senate in day-to-day issues such as the appointment of teachers, the working of the *annona*, and the dedication of monuments.<sup>98</sup>

Far from being a stagnant institution, the Senate continued to evolve in late antiquity, and so did its spatial setting. The *Historia Augusta* mentions the convening of senators in the secret meeting where Gordian I and his son were acclaimed emperors, in defiance of Maximinus Thrax, in 238. According to its author, secret senatorial meetings were usually summoned by emperors to settle issues that should be kept behind closed doors.<sup>99</sup> The reference to such meetings in the context of the third century is probably fictitious, but it might be a reflection of a late fourth-century reality.<sup>100</sup> In 376, Gratian instituted a special court of five senators, the *iudicium quinquievirale*, responsible for assisting urban prefects in trials involving *clarissimi*.<sup>101</sup> This was probably a response to a senatorial petition concerned with the excesses (especially torture) committed in the trials of senators during the reign of Valentinian I, Gratian's father.<sup>102</sup> The most likely setting for meetings closed to the public and special courts was the Secretarium Senatus, a structure probably located in one of the *tabernae* of the Forum of Caesar, next to the Curia. This identification is suggested by an inscribed architrave found during works in the neighbouring church of SS. Luca e Martina, more specifically in the crypt—probably the Secretarium, later adapted for Christian use. The inscription records works by Flavius Annius Eucharis Epiphanius, prefect of the city in 412/414, restoring to its original condition the structure founded by Nicomachus Flavianus *iunior* during his prefecture of the city, in 393–4.<sup>103</sup> Another inscription, also on an architrave, was found in the *porticus* of the Forum of Caesar behind the Senate house. The inscription mentions the restoration of a vaulted room, gleaming with gold, almost certainly by the urban prefect Praetextatus, in 367.<sup>104</sup> The

(1999A) 255–6, for the identification of the Atrium. *Cod. Iust.* 2.52.6, from 327, was probably posted in this same space ('Romae ad senatum'). On the posting of laws in late Roman buildings, see Liebs (1985).

<sup>97</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 24, which also shows that emperors could sometimes request additional information. Symm. *Ep.* 6.8 suggests that senators away from the city were also interested in such documents.

<sup>98</sup> e.g. Symm., *Ep.* 1.79 (teachers); *Ep.* 6.12 (*annona*); see De Francisci (1946–7) 280 and Chastagnol (1986) 86–92. See Chapter 1 for the involvement of the Senate in public works.

<sup>99</sup> See SHA, *Gord.* 12.1–4.

<sup>100</sup> As suggested by Talbert (1984) 199.

<sup>101</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.1.13, addressed to the Senate. See Lizzi Testa (2004) 247 for a discussion of this court.

<sup>102</sup> See the remarks of Harries (1999) 120.

<sup>103</sup> *CIL* VI, 1718 = *EDR* 111471: 'Secretarium amplissimi senatus, quod vir inlustris Flavianus instituerat...'. See Fraschetti (1999A) 218–36 for a detailed discussion of the structure and its location.

<sup>104</sup> *CIL* VI, 41378 = *EDR* 073920; the inscription actually records a fifth-century restoration of the structure: '...cameram auro fulgentem, quam Ve[t]tius Agorius Praetextatus?, vir inlustris, cons[ul] [truxerat?], Fl. Ianu[ari]us, v[ir] c[larissimus], pr[ae]f[ectus] urbi —? pro]videntia pro genio senatus amplissimi resta[uravit]'.

identity of this structure remains uncertain, but the provenance of the inscription suggests that it was the Atrium Libertatis, located in that same spot. The discovery of part of an architrave bearing the inscription '[...]nius Bas[sus...]', most likely the prefect Iunius Bassus (359) or Anicius Auchenius Bassus (382), in the same area, confirms that spaces connected to the Senate house were the object of great care in the late fourth century.<sup>105</sup>

The Curia and its annexes remained the most significant setting for senatorial interaction with the emperor and his court. It was a place where senators could display their loyalty as well as their disagreement—sometimes defiance—towards their rulers. It was during his visit to the Senate house that Constantius II was addressed by the eastern senator and orator Themistius, who came to Rome to defend imperial benefactions to Constantinople and the expansion of the senatorial order in the East.<sup>106</sup> Being closely connected with the eastern court, Themistius tactfully avoided mentioning the victories of the junior emperor Julian when praising Constantius' military glories, perhaps for fear of diminishing the feats of the Augustus.<sup>107</sup> However, members of the Roman elite could use that area to express different political opinions: Orfitus, prefect on the occasion of the imperial visit, dedicated at least one statue to the 'most noble and powerful Caesar' Julian, right next to the statues dedicated to Constantius in front of the building.<sup>108</sup> A few years later, in 361, Julian addressed a letter to the Curia, explaining his reasons for rising against Constantius; in response, the senators unanimously demanded that he respect his senior colleague, in spite of many having supported the usurpation of Magnentius, as we saw earlier.<sup>109</sup> The Senate also showed political initiative when it condemned the senator Hymetius to be exiled, rather than sentencing him to capital punishment, as desired by the emperor Valentinian I (angering an often irritable ruler).<sup>110</sup> The Roman senatorial aristocracy was considerably more prestigious and powerful than the elites of other cities in the empire, and its ambitions went beyond those of a mere municipal council. This was acknowledged by the general and *de facto* leader of the western empire in the late fourth century, Stilicho, when he asked the Senate to denounce as public enemy the former *magister militum* Gildo, leader of a rebellion in Africa in 398.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>105</sup> AE 2003, 210 = EDR 029192; see also La Rocca (2001) 181–2 (with fig. 8).

<sup>106</sup> Them., Or. 3.40; see also Heather and Moncour (2001) 120–5. See Amm. Marc. 16.10.13, for the imperial visit to the Curia.

<sup>107</sup> Noted by Heather and Moncour (2001) 120.

<sup>108</sup> CIL VI, 1168 = LSA 1099: 'nobilissimo ac fortissimo Caesari'. Julian was also associated with Constantius in CIL VI, 1164 = LSA 1280 (from 358).

<sup>109</sup> Amm. Marc. 21.10.7.

<sup>110</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.23.

<sup>111</sup> See Zos. 5.11.1 and Claudian, *De cos. Stil.* 1.325–7. The fact that Stilicho asked Symmachus, himself the owner of properties in Africa, to communicate to him personally the senatorial decision, is of great significance: Symm., *Ep.* 4.5.

Local political priorities also played an important role in the dedication of monuments honouring emperors in the vicinity of the Senate house. The area between the Comitium and the column of Phocas was the find-spot of a considerable number of bases of imperial statues. Almost all fourth-century emperors were honoured in this space, being physically associated with the Curia. In 389, the urban prefect Ceionius Rufius Albinus dedicated statues to Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius, celebrating them for the defeat of Magnus Maximus, who ruled part of the West between 383 and 388. The dedicatory inscriptions were identical, except for the name of the emperor: 'To the vanquisher of usurpers and founder of public security, our lord Theodosius, perpetual and fortunate, forever Augustus. Ceionius Rufius Albinus, of *clarissimus* rank, prefect of the City, twice judge representing the emperor, devoted to his divine spirit and majesty, [set this up].'<sup>112</sup> The formulaic character of the inscription, echoing celebrations of previous 'vanquishers of usurpers', intentionally obscured a complex political reality. Maximus' rule had been temporarily recognized by Theodosius, and members of the Roman elite had maintained links with his regime—most notoriously Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, who composed a panegyric in his honour.<sup>113</sup> Albinus' dedications demonstrate, in this sense, the speed with which members of the Roman elite could acknowledge turns in political events. Albinus also dedicated a statue to Thermantia, Theodosius' mother, on the slope leading to the imperial palace (the Clivus Palatinus), showing how different spaces could be used to convey different messages—in this case, celebrating the new ruling dynasty.<sup>114</sup> The area in front of the Curia was the ideal setting for marking the restoration of imperial unity. Aristocrats occupying the position of urban prefects could thus express their loyalty to the court, while acknowledging (and celebrating) the source of their political success—an imperial appointment.

The absence of certain emperors from the Forum's epigraphic record is perhaps more revealing than their presence. There is no evidence of dedications to Constans and Constantine II (the brothers of Constantius II), Julian as an Augustus, or Jovian.<sup>115</sup> The most puzzling absence is that of Gratian, a pious Christian emperor who held the title of Augustus from 367 to 383, enjoying good relations with Roman aristocrats for this entire period.<sup>116</sup> Symmachus describes, in a letter sent to his friend and courtier Ausonius in early 376, how the official announcement of the young

<sup>112</sup> *CIL* VI, 36959 = *LSA* 1374 (Theodosius): 'Extinctori tyrannorum / ac securitati / auctori, / d(omino) n(ostro) Theodosio, / perpetuo ac felici, / semper Augusto. / Ceionius Rufius Albinus, v(ir) c(larissimus), / praef(ectus) urbi, iterum / vice sacra iudicans, d(evotus) n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue) eius'. See also *CIL* VI, 3791a = 31413 = *LSA* 1356 (Valentinian II) and *CIL* VI, 3791b = 31414 = *LSA* 1357 (Arcadius). Kalas (2015) 87–8 suggests that the three statues were part of a single monument, but this cannot be proved.

<sup>113</sup> See Matthews (1990) 179 for the wider context, and Humphreys (2015) 164–5 for Rome.

<sup>114</sup> *CIL* VI, 36960 = *LSA* 2667.

<sup>115</sup> As mentioned above, *CIL* VI, 1168 = *LSA* 1099 honours Julian as Caesar.

<sup>116</sup> See, on Gratian and the Roman aristocracy, Lizzi Testa (2004) 350–1; also Matthews (1990) 66–9.

emperor's promotion to the throne was greeted by excited and overjoyed senators gathered in the Curia before dawn.<sup>117</sup> Gratian's virtual absence from Rome's epigraphic record (and not only in the Forum), might be due to the chance disappearance of all monuments dedicated to him.<sup>118</sup> This is unlikely, however, and we cannot rule out the possibility that at least sometimes members of the Roman elite would choose not to honour emperors—even the allegedly good ones.

Aristocrats were also honoured in the Forum.<sup>119</sup> A fragmentary base discovered in front of the Curia records a dedication to Clodius Octavianus.<sup>120</sup> The state of the inscription does not allow us to date it precisely, but we know that Octavianus had a successful career in the second half of the fourth century, occupying positions in the imperial court, the provinces, and the city of Rome (as *vicarius urbis*).<sup>121</sup> The base of a statue dedicated to Neratius Cerealis was found nearby, as well as a posthumous dedication to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus.<sup>122</sup> A specifically Roman agenda can also be detected in a number of statues dedicated to Stilicho. The barbarian general was honoured in the Forum on four different occasions, by the Senate and *populus Romanus*, in acknowledgment of his military victories.<sup>123</sup> Stilicho was close to the emperor, and as such these dedications can be seen as responses to the influence of the imperial power. However, choosing to flatter the *magister militum* over his imperial ruler was a political statement, acknowledging his pre-eminent standing in western political life.

Senators might have met in other parts of the city too, but the Forum remained the focus of their public life.<sup>124</sup> The ancient centre of Rome was an arena for different types of interaction, bustling with politicians, lawyers, and their clients and attendants.<sup>125</sup> This busy character is emphasized in the inscribed dedication of a statue set up by the prefect Probianus, in 377: 'Gabinus Vettius Probianus, of *clarissimus* rank, prefect of the city, diligently restored [this] statue, fallen in a fatal calamity, brought to the most frequented location of the city'.<sup>126</sup> Restoration works, rituals, and political celebrations gave shape and meaning to the Forum,

<sup>117</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 1.13. For the political context and subtleties of this letter, see Bruggisser (1987).

<sup>118</sup> The only dedication of statue to Gratian that survives from Rome is *CIL* VI, 1181 = *LSA* 1292, dedicated with *CIL* VI, 1180 = *LSA* 1291 (to Valentinian).

<sup>119</sup> See Bauer (1996) 75. As Chenault (2012) 124 observes, the Forum of Trajan was a more important setting for aristocratic monuments.

<sup>120</sup> *CIL* VI, 37124 = *LSA* 1378.

<sup>121</sup> See *PLRE* I, Octavianus 2 for his career.

<sup>122</sup> See *CIL* VI, 1744g = *LSA* 1454 to Cerealis (but this might come from his baths on the Esquiline), and *CIL* VI, 1779a = 31929 = *LSA* 1409 to Praetextatus. *CIL* VI, 41348 = *LSA* 1582, also from the Forum, was dedicated to an unidentified aristocrat (it is too fragmentary).

<sup>123</sup> *CIL* VI, 1730 = *LSA* 1436, *CIL* VI, 1731 = 1195 = *LSA* 1437, and *CIL* VI, 3868 = 31988 = 41381 = *LSA* 1490. *CIL* VI, 31987 = *LSA* 1363 is dedicated to the *fides* and *virtus* of the imperial army, but it puts Stilicho in command of the army.

<sup>124</sup> Senators also met in the palace: Zos. 5.29.5.

<sup>125</sup> Amm. Marc. 30.4.8 mentions lawyers in eastern cities, trying to make a profit by taking action against wealthy people. On late antique *fora* as judicial spaces, see Lavan (2006) 213–15.

<sup>126</sup> *CIL* VI, 3864b = 31884 = *LSA* 1359: 'Gabinus Vettius / Probianus, v(ir) c(larissimus), praef(ectus) / urbi, / statuam fatali nece/sitate conlabsam, / celeberrimo urbis / loco adhibita, diligen/tia reparavit'.

presenting it as a space maintained and controlled by the city's elite. In the late fourth century, the old Republican centre, a monumental space that for centuries had been closely associated with imperial power, began to have more openly aristocratic overtones.

### The Senatorial Forum (AD 410–535)

The process of senatorial take-over of the Forum reached a new level after the first decades of the fifth century. The changes that affected Rome during the fifth century also involved the Forum. The damage caused by the Gothic and Vandalic sacks of 410 and 455, as well as by the civil conflict between the emperor Anthemius and his general Ricimer in 472, offered opportunities for the redefinition of this area as a space of increased aristocratic character. These changes took place in a context that was radically different from that of the previous century, as the number of restoration works declined dramatically across the city. It is difficult to assess the destruction caused in the Forum by military conflicts. Most of the scanty evidence comes from information concerning the restoration of the Basilica Aemilia and the neighbouring Curia. The fact that only the areas near these two buildings were embellished with statues after 410 indicates that these were considered a priority in spatial terms.<sup>127</sup> It is clear that different structures were destroyed or damaged at some point after 400, but it is nearly impossible to ascribe signs of destruction to specific historic events. Giacomo Boni, who was responsible for the excavation of the area in the early twentieth century, found a large number of sculptural fragments discarded in the basin of the Lacus Iuturnae, including statues and votive altars. Some of these were certainly taken from the Temple of the Dioscuri, but it is impossible to know when such destruction took place.<sup>128</sup> A badly damaged inscription, found in the same place, raises a similar difficulty: it mentions a restoration carried out by an urban prefect, after enormous destruction caused by an unknown event. There is nothing, however, to suggest a firm date for such restoration.<sup>129</sup>

We are considerably better informed about events surrounding the Basilica Aemilia. Excavations carried out in the early twentieth century revealed clear signs of destruction by fire at the beginning of the fifth century. A thick layer of ashes was discovered right on top of the Diocletianic pavement, mixed with pieces of

<sup>127</sup> *CIL* VI, 36956b = *LSA* 1373, *CIL* VI, 37109 = *LSA* 1375, *CIL* VI, 37110 = *LSA* 1376 (near the Basilica Aemilia); *CIL* VI, 41389 = *LSA* 1434 and *CIL* VI, 41398 = *LSA* 1525 (around the Curia).

<sup>128</sup> See Boni (1901) 89 and Vaglieri (1903) 181.

<sup>129</sup> *CIL* VI, 37134 = *EDR* 071780: '----- / [--- ruderib[us] i]mmanib[us] occupat[---]/qui utrique transitui fa[ciendo ---?] / etiam foro quod ruin[a ---] / desuper ornamentis [---] / v(ir) c(larissimus), iudex / sacrarum c[ognitionum], / restituit [---]'. A fourth-century date is suggested by G. Alföldy, in *CIL* VI.8.3, p. 4822, based on the style of the letters. See also Kajava (1989) 47–8.

iron and around one hundred bronze coins, the latest of which is datable to 404–8.<sup>130</sup> A small part of the building's lavish architectural decoration was found, indicating that although the roof collapsed, the basilica was still standing—and was spoliated in the years following the fire. The structure was not completely abandoned, however, and important works were carried out in the first decades of the fifth century. The wall that shuts off the whole western side of the basilica, facing the Argiletum and the Curia, can be dated to this period.<sup>131</sup> The side facing the Forum was embellished by the erection of a new *porticus*, built and decorated with reused materials.<sup>132</sup> Such works provided the old imperial monument with a new façade, shutting off the view from the building's interior. It is very likely that fragments of a marble architrave, found in this area, belonged to this *porticus*; the inscription, celebrating the restoration 'for the happiness of our lords Honorius and Theodosius II', records the author of the works—Aurelius Anicius Symmachus, urban prefect in 418–20.<sup>133</sup> The early fifth-century interventions on the Basilica Aemilia represented a radical break with the history of the building. Its original function was irremediably lost and the *aula* was abandoned, but a new façade was erected, marking the presence of the monument in that area. Statues could still be dedicated in its vicinity, and the monument could still play a role in the political life of the Forum, even if its original functions were now lost forever. The fate of the Basilica Aemilia can be understood as part of wider political transformations, and it must be considered in its proper physical and historical context.

The Senate house and the spaces connected to it also remained an important focus of attention during the fifth century, undergoing a series of restorations during this period. Some of these works were carried out at great expense. The inscription celebrating the restoration of the Atrium Libertatis by the urban prefect Flavius Ianuarius in the early fifth century mentions its gilded vaulted roof.<sup>134</sup> This was a remarkable feat for a city that had been recently plundered, and striking evidence of contemporary priorities. The inscription also records that the works were dedicated to 'the *genius* of the most distinguished Senate', indicating a clear association of this prestigious space and the Curia.<sup>135</sup> Inscribed marble architraves used in doorways that led to the Atrium Libertatis attest to the

<sup>130</sup> See Bartoli (1913) 759–60. For the coins, see Reece (2003) 158 and more recently Rovelli (2013).

<sup>131</sup> Bauer (1996) 34.

<sup>132</sup> Pensabene (2015) 174–5 and Bartoli (1913) 761. Lipps (2013) argues for a fourth-century date.

<sup>133</sup> *CIL* VI, 36962 = *LSA* 1542: 'Pro felicitate [d]d(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Honori [et Theodosi] / Aur(elius) [Anicius] Symmachus, [v(ir) c(larissimus), prae]f(ectus) urbi'. On Symmachus, see *PLRE* II, Symmachus 6, and Chastagnol (1962) 279–81.

<sup>134</sup> *CIL* VI, 41378 = *EDR* 073920, discussed above. See *CIL* VI.8.3, p. 5087 for a date soon after the sack. The identification of Ianuarius and the date of his prefecture remain uncertain, however: see discussion in Frascchetti (1999A) 210 (who postulates a later date).

<sup>135</sup> See, on this inscription and the *genius* of the Senate, Bruggisser (2011).

restoration of the Senate house at the time of Honorius and Theodosius II.<sup>136</sup> Pieces of another architrave, found near the complex, mention the urban prefect Symmachus, who was also involved in the restoration of the *porticus* that fronted the Basilica Aemilia.<sup>137</sup> Symmachus' works in the area were part of a more ambitious programme carried out in different parts of the city during his prefecture (418–20). He also dedicated a statue to Honorius, 'defender of the Roman dominion', near the Theatre of Pompey; another statue was dedicated to Flavius Constantius, consul for the third time in 420 (its provenance remains unknown).<sup>138</sup> Another prefect, Flavius Annius Epifanius, had already restored the Secretarium Senatus a few years earlier, after it had been 'consumed by a fatal fire'.<sup>139</sup> As these inscriptions show, senatorial spaces were badly damaged in or around the time of the sack of 410, but Roman aristocrats responded quickly by repairing them over the following two decades.

The works carried out in the Senate house should be seen in their political context. The Curia was still an important symbol of power in Rome and beyond. The Gallic senator and former urban prefect, Rutilius Namatianus, for example, referred to it as being open to all—Romans, Latins, and provincials alike—and his successful career in Rome was the best illustration of such openness.<sup>140</sup> Emperors still addressed laws to the Senate, regulating issues as diverse as inheritance rights, judicial proceedings, and the very compilation of the *Theodosian Code*.<sup>141</sup> The complex remained an important space for the interaction between the city's elite and their emperors.

The investment made in the Curia and its annexes was all the more relevant because it contrasted so dramatically with the fate of other structures in the area. The restoration of the building employed, among other materials, a reused architrave whose decoration suggests that it was taken from the monument to Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius on top of the Diocletianic *rostra*.<sup>142</sup> If this identification is correct, the imperial monument—formerly a splendid structure, topped by bronze statues—must have been badly damaged before the restoration of the Curia, most likely during the Visigothic sack, or used in the payment of the city's ransom to Alaric in 408.<sup>143</sup> In other words, a recently built imperial

<sup>136</sup> *CIL* VI, 41386 = *EDR* 073918 and *CIL* VI, 41387 = *EDR* 073919. See, on these fragments, the considerations of Bartoli (1963) 43.

<sup>137</sup> Recorded in *CIL* VI, 41376 = *EDR* 093609.

<sup>138</sup> Honorius: *CIL* VI, 1193 = *LSA* 1310 ('Romani orbis libertatisque custodi'); Constantius: *CIL* VI, 1719 = *LSA* 1423. Symmachus also restored a *macellum* in Ostia: *CIL* XIV, 4719 = *EDR* 106933.

<sup>139</sup> *CIL* VI, 1718 = *EDR* 111471: 'fatalis ignis absumpsit'.

<sup>140</sup> Rut. Nam., *De red. suo* 1.13–16. See Matthews (1990) 352–4.

<sup>141</sup> See e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 5.1.8 and 8.19.1 (inheritance); *Cod. Theod.* 4.10.2 and 9.1.19 (judicial proceedings), and *Cod. Theod.* 1.1.5–6 (compilation of the code). See more examples in De Francisci (1946–7) 281.

<sup>142</sup> See Bauer (1999) 229–30. The architrave was published in *CIL* VI, 41386 = *EDR* 073918.

<sup>143</sup> Discussion of the statues, their material, and their character: Bauer (1999) 221–5. On the plundering of bronze statues, see Lanciani (1899) 57.



monument (datable to 379/383) in the centre of the city was despoiled at a time when members of the court were actively engaged in restoring imperial rule after the turbulent first decade of the century.<sup>144</sup> Members of the Roman aristocracy were also engaged in this process, but, as the works carried out in the Forum show, they acted according to their own priorities.<sup>145</sup> This is made clear by the fact that, of all statue bases discovered in the Forum and datable to after 410, not a single one was dedicated to an emperor.<sup>146</sup> The *magister militum* Flavius Aetius was honoured by Theodosius II and Valentinian III in the Atrium Libertatis, and the base of a statue honouring the powerful aristocrat Petronius Maximus, dedicated by the same emperors, was discovered inside the Curia.<sup>147</sup> Maximus, when urban prefect for the second time, moved or re-dedicated three statues in the vicinity of the Basilica Aemilia, continuing the practice of embellishing senatorial and civic areas with prestigious works of art.<sup>148</sup>

The importance of the area in the life of the city is suggested by the conflicts surrounding the succession of bishop Zosimus. Symmachus, the urban prefect at that time (419), mentioned dramatic events taking place in the area in a letter sent to Constantius, count and master of the armies. The bishop Achilleus, from Spoleto, had been commissioned by the emperor Honorius to celebrate the Easter mass in the Lateran Basilica, and both the Senate and the urban prefect had been informed of this decision.<sup>149</sup> On the day of Achilleus' arrival, however, the agitated crowd gathered in the Forum to prevent him from entering the area, and then continued on to the Temple of Peace, where they threatened the prefect.<sup>150</sup> The fact that the Christian crowd moved to the Temple of Peace from the Forum suggests that the gathering took place in the vicinity of the Curia, from where they could proceed through the street known as Argiletum. That was probably a busy area, as indicated by the number of statues dedicated there, as well as by the restorations being carried out on that side of the Forum by the prefect Symmachus himself.

The Forum was an important space for the formation of public opinion, where people met, argued, and demonstrated. Sidonius Apollinaris refers, in a letter probably datable to 461, to a satirical poem circulating in the court, of which he was accused of being the author—an accusation he denied vigorously.<sup>151</sup> When his friend Catullinus, a *vir inlustris* and former official in Rome, heard these verses, he remarked that they 'deserved by right to be immortalized by being inscribed on a plate in letters of gold, to be set up on the *rostra* or even on the Capitol'.<sup>152</sup> The

<sup>144</sup> The *rostra* were converted into a workshop by the early sixth century: Giuliani and Verduchi (1897) 163.

<sup>145</sup> See, for the wider political context, Matthews (1990) 352–76.

<sup>146</sup> Excepting the much later dedication to Phocas (608): *CIL* VI, 1200 = *LSA* 1313.

<sup>147</sup> Respectively, *CIL* VI, 41389 = *LSA* 1434 (437–45) and *CIL* VI, 41398 = *LSA* 1525 (433–7).

<sup>148</sup> *CIL* VI, 36956b = *LSA* 1373, *CIL* VI, 37109 = *LSA* 1375, and *CIL* VI, 37110 = *LSA* 1376.

<sup>149</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 21 and 22.

<sup>150</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 29.3.

<sup>151</sup> *Ep.* 1.11. On the context of this letter, see Harries (1994) 93–4.

<sup>152</sup> *Ep.* 1.11.3 (transl. Anderson). On Catullinus, see *PLRE* II, Catullinus 2.

*rostra*, an important space for the interaction between emperors and the *populus*, could also be used as a political instrument, as a place for publicizing calumnies about senators and officials. Issues of personal power and reputation played an important role in late Roman political life, and the Forum was one of the spaces where power and prestige could be publicly displayed and/or destroyed through vicious and anonymous attacks.

The Vandal sack of the city in 455 also caused damage to the area, as we can infer from Procopius' narrative of these events. After pillaging the palace, the barbarians moved to the Capitol, damaging the Temple of Peace along the way.<sup>153</sup> An inscribed marble architrave, broken into six pieces, records a restoration carried out by the urban prefect Vettius Iunius Valentinus sometime between 456 and 476.<sup>154</sup> The connection between his works and the sack is supported by two inscriptions of uncertain provenance recording his restoration of statues 'damaged by an enemy attack'.<sup>155</sup> The area suffered again during the storming of the city by the soldiers of Ricimer, in 472. A coin hoard found in one of the rooms in the nearby Atrium Vestae (where the Vestals lived), datable to this period, suggests that spaces around the Forum were involved in the conflict.<sup>156</sup> The *porticus* in front of the Curia, the Atrium Minervae, was also affected during these events. The base of the statue dedicated to the goddess in that spot records: 'The statue of Minerva, broken by the collapse of the roof that was destroyed by fire during a civil conflict, was restored to better condition and in its entirety by Anicius Acilius Aginatus Faustus, of *clarissimus* and *illustris* rank, urban prefect and judge in place of the emperor, for the happiness of our times'.<sup>157</sup> That a statue of a pagan deity could be dedicated by a (presumably) Christian prefect, at such a late date, should be seen as evidence of the weight of traditionalism in senatorial political conceptions. The very identity of this space, also called *Athenaion* and *Chalcidicum* in earlier sources, rested on the statue.<sup>158</sup>

We do not know whether other parts of the senatorial complex were damaged or restored, but we know that they were still in use. Sidonius Apollinaris narrates, in a long letter, the trial of Arvandus, praetorian prefect of the Gauls on two occasions (between 464 and 468).<sup>159</sup> Arvandus had been accused of, among other things, high treason, and his case was particularly embarrassing for Sidonius

<sup>153</sup> Proc., *Wars* 3.5.1–4 (Palace and Capitol) and 4.9.5 (Temple of Peace).

<sup>154</sup> *CIL* VI, 41405 = *EDR* 093628. This was traditionally attributed to the so-called *Rostra Vandalica*, but this identification is incorrect: see Bauer (1996) 24. For the date, see *PLRE* II, Valentinus 5.

<sup>155</sup> *CIL* VI, 41403 = *LSA* 1527 and *CIL* VI, 41404 = *LSA* 1476: 'hostili impetus sublata'.

<sup>156</sup> Most of the coins are datable to the reign of Anthemius: see Vaglieri (1903) 75 n. 1.

<sup>157</sup> *CIL* VI, 526 = *LSA* 791: 'Simulacrum Minerbae, / abolendo incendio / tumultus civilis igni / tecto cadente confractum, / Anicius Acilius Aginatus / Faustus, v(ir) c(larissimus) et in(l)ustris, praef(ectus) urbi / vic(e) sac(ra) iud(icans), in melius / integro proviso pro / beatitudine temporis restituit'. For the identification of these civil conflicts as Ricimer's civil war, see Fraschetti (1999A) 160.

<sup>158</sup> See Machado (2009) 331–3, with bibliography.

<sup>159</sup> *Ep.* 1.7. For the trial and its context, see Harries (1994) 158–66 and De Francisci (1946–7) 285–7. See also *PLRE* II, Arvandus.

because they were friends—and as urban prefect Sidonius was responsible for the trial. Arvandus was kept prisoner on the Capitol, from where he was brought to the Curia.<sup>160</sup> The occasion was presided over by ten senatorial judges rather than the urban prefect, as Sidonius had left the city to avoid this embarrassing occasion.<sup>161</sup> Although not by an eyewitness, Sidonius' account illuminates the complexities of the Curia as a working space. There were different zones of seating for attendants according to their status; supporters and accusers of Arvandus sat on opposite sides, facing each other, 'as was customary'.<sup>162</sup> There was great concern with how each side would present itself. Arvandus displayed enormous arrogance and self-confidence, whereas his opponents wore simple clothes and behaved humbly. The trial was, in other words, a magnificent theatrical display. The fact that such sessions were closed to the public should not be seen as a contradiction. Arvandus' luxurious clothes, as well as his opponents' alleged humbleness, were aimed not only at the people waiting outside, the same people that saw him taken away stripped of his insignia of status, but also at their peers and judges.

Although the Roman senatorial elite became a more local (Roman and Italian) group in the course of the fifth century, their standing and connections ensured that the Senate house remained a point of reference in imperial and (especially) Ostrogothic political life. It was the Senate that returned the imperial insignia to the Byzantine emperor Zeno, announcing the acceptance of Ostrogothic rule.<sup>163</sup> Theoderic visited the area at the beginning of the sixth century, when he addressed the Senate in the Curia and the people '*ad Palmam*'.<sup>164</sup> Fulgentius of Ruspe attended this occasion, and his biographer describes the event emphasizing its splendour and the impression it left on the African bishop. The senatorial nobility was present, arranged according to its different degrees of honour. The free people of Rome also came, completing the representation of late Roman society as a political body.<sup>165</sup> Rome was still seen as the *caput mundi*, and the Forum was the place where this conception was ceremoniously represented, in a highly structured way.<sup>166</sup> The Ostrogothic king, the aristocracy, and the *populus* gathered in the same place where Constantius II and Theodosius I had once been received. Even at such a late date, the Forum remained a space where an ideal image of late Roman society could be presented to locals and foreigners.

<sup>160</sup> *Ep.* 1.7.4.      <sup>161</sup> *Ep.* 1.7.9.      <sup>162</sup> *Ep.* 1.7.9: 'ut moris est'.

<sup>163</sup> Malchus, *Frag.* 14.

<sup>164</sup> Anon. *Val.* 12.66. For Theoderic's visit, see Vitiello (2004).

<sup>165</sup> V. S. *Fulgentii*, 13.27 (*PL* 65.130): '... Romanae curiae nobilitatem, decus ordinemque distinctis decoratam gradibus aspectaret, et favores liberi populi castis auribus audiens, qualis esset huius saeculi gloriosa pompa cognosceret'. See the observations of Liverani (2007) 177.

<sup>166</sup> V. S. *Fulgentii*, 13.27 (*PL* 65.130).

## Conclusion

In 522, the sons of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, one of the main supporters of the Ostrogothic regime, had the unusual distinction of being appointed to the consulship in the same year. The tribute paid to Boethius' family echoed in many ways the honour received in 395 by the sons of Petronius Probus, their distant ancestors. As the sixth-century senator recollected years later, the ceremony culminated in the Senate house, where his sons took office.<sup>167</sup> The conservatism of the demonstrations by newly appointed consuls, as well as by the visit of Theoderic in 500 is striking, but the reality was rather different. Political propaganda aside, Theoderic was a foreigner, ruling a kingdom that in many respects had no resemblance to the empire headed by fourth-century emperors. Although *adventus* ceremonies and consular processions could momentarily turn this area into the symbolic centre of the universe, these were transitory occasions. The end of the western empire and the progressive loss of its territorial domain made it impossible for members of the Ostrogothic Senate to play the same imperial role as that of their fourth- and fifth-century predecessors.

By the time of Theoderic the Roman Forum was essentially a local centre, where the city's elite could display its prestige, power, and political values. It was a space where the *populus* and the Senate could celebrate their social and political status. Social distinctions were openly displayed, as if to confirm to those present that the city and its centre did not belong to all in the same way. The continued importance of the area is confirmed by the fact that the Senate house and its adjacent buildings were still restored during this period, in works carried out by high-ranking officials and aristocrats. The Atrium Libertatis was restored by the urban prefect Valerius Florianus sometime between 491 and 493. The inscription recording his repairs mention septuagenarian structures (possibly columns) damaged by the passing of time, and also makes reference to the Secretarium Senatus and the Capitolium—perhaps also involved in the works.<sup>168</sup> A few years later, the praetorian prefect Ioannes carried out unspecified works in the Curia, an initiative that earned him a good reputation: his works are mentioned in the letter sent by the Ostrogothic king Athalaric to his son Reparatus, appointing the latter urban prefect.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Boeth., *Consol.* 2.3.28–30. This ceremony will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>168</sup> CIL VI, 40807 = EDR 073917: 'Salvis dominis nostris, Anastasio perpetuo / Augusto et gloriosissimo ac triumphali viro / Theoderico, Valerius Flori[an]us, v(ir) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris), / ex com(ite) domest(icorum), ex com(ite) [sacrar(um)] larg(itionum), prae(f)ectus Urb(i), / in atrio Libertat[is] ---? septuagenarias, / quae vetus[tate] temporis] carie fuerant / [f]e[r]e[re] co[n]f[ect]ae, reparavit et] omnia eius loci / [re]f[ecit] [---] et in secretario / [senatus ---]ves simili / [---]tavit quam eius / [---] Capitolium / [---] fuerat ex omni / [---]ive loco'. The inscription belongs to the period before Anastasius acknowledged Theoderic as king: see Frascchetti (1999A) 203–5.

<sup>169</sup> Cass., *Var.* 9.7.2. See PLRE II, Ioannes 67, and Reparatus 1.

In contrast to its imperial character in the early fourth century, by the end of our period the Roman Forum was largely dominated by the Senate house and its adjacent structures. This change was the result of a slow process, in which members of the aristocracy played an increasing role in the physical and symbolic redefinition of the area. For the entire fourth century, senators and prefects continued to honour and display their loyalty to the imperial court through the dedication of statues and monuments. Imperial visits were magnificent occasions in which the Forum was turned into the centre of the empire, attracting courtiers, embassies, the *populus*, and the Roman elite. As time passed, members of the aristocracy were able to display their interests and assert their priorities in an increasingly open way, appropriating the Forum for the celebration and exercise of their power. They did it in a very changed context from that of their fourth- and fifth-century predecessors. The sons of Boethius could celebrate their nomination for the consulship in the same way as their ancestors, but the basis of their prestige and power was less stable than it had ever been. What we know about their consular inauguration was written by their father while awaiting execution in Ravenna, only two years after their moment of supreme glory, and this is perhaps the best illustration of this instability.

## 4

# Festivals, Ceremonies, and the Commemoration of Power

In 354, the Christian aristocrat Valentinus was presented with an illustrated *codex* containing a variety of documents about the city of Rome and its history.<sup>1</sup> The *codex* comprised a list of imperial anniversaries, of the planets and the signs of the Zodiac, of Roman consuls, of the prefects of Rome, and of the dates of deposition of Roman martyrs and bishops, among other information.<sup>2</sup> It also contained one of the few complete ancient calendars to survive. The Calendar of 354 records 214 days of celebration, including pagan festivals and imperial anniversaries, with 177 days of circus races, gladiatorial combats, and theatrical displays.<sup>3</sup> Some of these dates, like the Lupercalia on 15 February, had been celebrated since the origins of the city (or so it was believed); others had been introduced more recently, as in the case of the anniversaries of the emperors Gordian (20 January) and Constantine (27 February).<sup>4</sup> Calendars played an important role in Roman life, giving structure and order to it by marking special occasions for social interaction. They defined when, where, and who took part in specific public events, offering us a precious insight into the social, political, and cultural life of the *Urbs*.<sup>5</sup>

By the time the Calendar of 354 was being compiled, different notions of sacred time and space circulated in Roman society. These notions were connected to the changing status of the *Urbs* in imperial life, as emperors became more distant figures and the local elite sought to affirm its presence in a more assertive fashion.<sup>6</sup> They were also affected by the establishment of the Christian community and the development of a specific set of celebrations based on the life of Christ as well as on the Roman cult of saints.<sup>7</sup> Pagan and imperial festivals are still mentioned in the mid-fifth-century calendar of Polemius Silvius, but now side by side with Christian occasions. The Christianization of time required tremendous efforts by

<sup>1</sup> The identity of Valentinus and the context for the *codex* are discussed in Salzman (1990), esp. pp. 199–205.

<sup>2</sup> It might also have included one of the Regionary Catalogues, the *Notitia urbis Romae*, but this might also have been a later addition: Salzman (1990) 50–1.

<sup>3</sup> The main publication of the Calendar is *InscrIt* 13.2, pp. 237–62. Its most comprehensive study is Salzman (1990).

<sup>4</sup> See Salzman (1990) 131–46 for imperial celebrations and 164–76 for later cults.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these issues have been discussed in Machado (2010A).

<sup>6</sup> See, on imperial celebrations, Curran (2000) 218–59; on processions, Latham (2016) 183–232.

<sup>7</sup> See Fraschetti (1999A) 294–311; also Salzman (1999). For Christian notions of time in general, see Markus (1990) 125–35.

imperial legislators and by members of the Church, who sought to regulate or even ban traditional occasions and forms of celebration—a process analysed by scholars like Robert Markus and Augusto Frascchetti.<sup>8</sup> As bishop Leo the Great explicitly observed in the middle of the fifth century, the first day for the collection of alms was instituted to coincide with the *ludi Apollinares*, which took place between 5 and 13 July.<sup>9</sup> This was not a smooth or linear process, and bishops were not always successful. The same Leo lamented, on another occasion, the ungratefulness of the Romans, who preferred the company of the demons in the Circus to the celebration of penance and divine mercy in a service instituted in remembrance of the sack of the city, in 410.<sup>10</sup>

The difficulties faced by Leo and other Christian authorities in regulating and banning traditional ceremonies can probably be ascribed to the formative role played by games, festivals, and rituals in the very definition of the city.<sup>11</sup> This was acknowledged in an edict addressed by Constantius II and Constans to the urban prefect Aco Catullinus in 342:

Although all superstitions must be completely eradicated, nevertheless, it is our will that the buildings of the temples situated outside the walls shall remain untouched and uninjured. For since certain plays and spectacles of the circus or contests derive their origin from some of these temples, such structures shall not be torn down, since from them is provided the regular performance of long-established amusements for the Roman people.<sup>12</sup>

Even when condemning all forms of *superstitio*, emperors still acknowledged the importance of festivities for the Roman people, as well as their religious origin and their continued topographical connection with the temples located in the suburb. It is possible that, as Richard Lim recently argued, Christian authorities were trying to reframe Rome's festive life as secular, in an attempt to preserve it free of its religious content.<sup>13</sup> It is clear, however, that for large parts of the population (including bishops like Leo), the religious meanings of these occasions were still relevant and therefore worthy of concern.<sup>14</sup> This was true of magnificent events, such as *ludi* and imperial *adventus*, as well as of more personal celebrations, such as funerals. Power was not just meant to be used, but also to be displayed.<sup>15</sup> This could be done routinely, in the daily exchanges and interactions that gave life to the streets of Rome, but never as magnificently as in the rituals, festivals, and ceremonies that filled the days and weeks of the year.

<sup>8</sup> Markus (1990) 107–23 is particularly interesting in this respect. See also Van Slyke (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Leo, *Serm.* 22; see also *Serm.* 23. This is discussed by Salzman (2010) 349.

<sup>10</sup> Leo, *Serm.* 71. See, on this service, Morin (1933); more recently Salzman (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Machado (2010A) 288–9; also Frascchetti (1989) 610–11.

<sup>12</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.3 (transl. Pharr).

<sup>13</sup> Lim (2012) 72–3.

<sup>14</sup> See Sotinel (2010).

<sup>15</sup> As argued by Flaig (2003); this is explored by Bell (2004).

The spectacular nature of public life is important to us because it was a central aspect in the way power was experienced, as well as in the way that Roman society conceived itself. As John Curran showed, imperial celebrations in the Circus Maximus were occasions when Rome was reminded of its close association with its distant rulers, as well as opportunities for discussing the very nature of imperial power.<sup>16</sup> In spite of its problematic status among Christian authorities, these events would remain a crucial element in the relationship between emperors and the city of Rome until the end of our period.<sup>17</sup> At a time of profound religious and political changes, members of the Roman aristocracy found new opportunities to engage in the city's festive life, turning the city space into a stage where their power was reaffirmed and celebrated. This chapter examines the involvement of aristocrats in the ceremonial life of the city, analysing the ways in which these opportunities were used for displaying their social status in late Roman society. Senatorial pre-eminence was explicitly asserted both on official and personal occasions. By occupying imperial offices, senators could celebrate their involvement in the public life of the city and of the empire, be it in imperial festivals or in the commemoration of their own political achievements. At the same time, personal celebrations offered opportunities for the advertisement of aristocratic standing, consolidating their dominating position in the *Urbs*.

### The Celebration of Political Status

Even when living away from Rome, emperors could still play a crucial role in its festive and ceremonial life. Imperial visits, and especially triumphal processions, were the grandest of these occasions.<sup>18</sup> Constantine's triumph over Maxentius, celebrated on 28 October 312, was one such spectacular moment.<sup>19</sup> According to a panegyric probably read at Trier soon after these events, this was a spectacular event: his chariot was surrounded by crowds of the *populus* and of the Senate, and the city was brought to a still as every citizen tried to approach him.<sup>20</sup> The arch dedicated by the Senate, depicting scenes of his victorious entrance into the city and of his interactions with the senators and the commoners, is a worthy reminder of this occasion (Fig. 2.1). In 357, his son Constantius II also entered Rome in a triumphal procession. According to Ammianus, Constantius rode on a golden carriage, escorted by his numerous troops, dressed in splendid uniforms. The procession was a dazzling sight. The soldiers were comparable to works by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles, whereas the emperor himself was a living statue—always

<sup>16</sup> Curran (2000) 258–9. <sup>17</sup> Curran (2000) 259; Latham (2016) 197–207.

<sup>18</sup> See MacCormack (1981); also Vitiello (2000) and Humphries (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Seeck (1919) 160; Kienast (1996) 299.

<sup>20</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 12(9).19; Nixon and Rodgers (1994) 289–90 for the context.



calm and imperturbable, motionless, unless when passing through the city gates.<sup>21</sup> As we saw in Chapter 3, Constantius visited the Forum, where he addressed the people and the senators, and where he was honoured with panegyrics and statues. The imperial arrival should not be taken as a celebration of the court only. According to Ammianus, when the emperor first saw the senatorial delegation that came to meet him outside the city, he thought 'that the sanctuary of the whole world was present before him'.<sup>22</sup> Scholars usually pay special attention to imperial entrances and processions in Rome. These were spectacular (and conveniently well-documented) occasions, when the spaces of the *Urbs* and its population were mobilized to honour the ruling power.<sup>23</sup> But, as Ammianus reminds us, the city's elite used such moments as opportunities to display their standing and authority to members of the visiting court as well as to local spectators.

An alternative account of Constantius II's *adventus* is provided by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, in his third *Relatio*: '...he [i.e. the emperor] followed an overjoyed Senate through all the streets of the Eternal City and, with no sign of disapproval in his face, he saw its shrines, read the inscribed names of the gods on the pediments, asked questions about the origins of the temples, showed his admiration for their founders'.<sup>24</sup> Rather than mere spectators, senators played an active role in the imperial ceremony, greeting the emperor outside the city and accompanying him in procession through the streets of Rome.<sup>25</sup> When Theoderic visited the city in 500, a delegation of the Senate met him outside the walls, this time led by the pope himself.<sup>26</sup> An imperial arrival was a formidable occasion for the celebration of senatorial participation in the imperial regime. It offered senators an opportunity to act as mediators in the process of political communication established between the imperial court and the inhabitants of the former imperial capital.<sup>27</sup> It confirmed, to the eyes of the Roman people, the social standing of the aristocrats that they usually met in the streets, *fora*, and *domus* of late antique Rome.

Roman senators were rewarded for their participation in imperial occasions. An inscribed statue base discovered during the construction of Via dei Fori Imperiali, behind the Basilica of Maxentius, records the dedication of a statue to the *praefectus annonae* Attius Caecilius Maximilianus:

<sup>21</sup> The visual aspects of Ammianus' description were discussed in MacMullen (1964) 438–41. This description echoes the artistic representations in the arch of Constantine: see MacCormack (1981) 43–5.

<sup>22</sup> Amm. Marc. 16.10.5: '...sed asylum mundi totius adesse existimabat'.

<sup>23</sup> Benoist (2005) analyses different imperial ceremonies in Rome.

<sup>24</sup> Symm., *Rel.* 3.7: '...et per omnes vias aeternae urbis laetum secutus Senatum vidit placido ore delubra, legit inscripta fastigiis deum nomina, percontatus templorum origines est, miratos est conditores...'.  
<sup>25</sup> As in the case of Constantine's entrance in Rome: see *Pan. Lat.* 4(10).31.1 and 12(9).9.1. This aspect is emphasized by Humphries (2007) 30.

<sup>26</sup> Anon. Val. 65–6. See Vitiello (2004) for an analysis of this occasion.

<sup>27</sup> For *adventus* as political communication, see Schmidt-Hofner (2012) 34–43.

[Statue of] Pancharius. To Attius Caecilius Maximilianus, of *clarissimus* rank, *quaestor*, candidate to the praetorship, prefect of the treasury of Saturn and at the same time deputy supervisor of the water supply, governor of Lucania and Bruttium, prefect of the *annona* of the city of Rome, through whose diligence and foresight, during the entrance into the city of Rome of our lord Constantius the greatest, victorious and triumphant, forever Augustus, the *annona* for the people and the most powerful army was managed to satisfaction . . .<sup>28</sup>

As prefect of the *annona*, Maximilianus had been responsible for the supply of the city during Constantius' visit in 357. This was not a minor task; although the imperial visit lasted approximately one month only, the prefect had to provide not only for the usual food supply of the city, but also for the soldiers and for the extraordinary distributions to the *populus*.<sup>29</sup>

The inscription celebrating the *praefectus annonae* of 357 does not mention his senior colleague, the *praefectus urbi*, an omission that might be related to the conflicting relationship between the two officials.<sup>30</sup> If this is correct, the imperial visit of 357 provided an opportunity for the prefect of the *annona* to assert his political and administrative importance, representing therefore a good example of how imperial ceremonies could be politically appropriated by local dignitaries. After all, the arrival of an emperor with his courtiers and soldiers would have had a disruptive effect on any ancient city.<sup>31</sup> A law addressed to the *magister officiorum* of the East in 398 established that, in the cities where emperors or their representatives sojourned, the imperial entourage should be lodged in the houses of the local population, rich and poor. Men of illustrious rank were entitled to occupy half of the property, whereas men of lesser rank were to content themselves with one third.<sup>32</sup> It is not difficult to imagine the impact of such measures on the daily lives of the hundreds of thousands that inhabited Rome in the mid-fourth century. Local officials played a crucial role in ensuring that such complex occasions passed without popular uproar.

Being in office offered an opportunity to exercise power, as well as to display it. Roman aristocrats seized every occasion to celebrate their own standing, even when acting on behalf of the court. The inauguration of imperial monuments

<sup>28</sup> CIL VI, 41332 = LSA 1252: 'Panchar[i]. / Attio Caecilio Maximiliano, c(larissimo) [v(iro)], / quaest(ori), praetori candidato, / [p]raef(ecto) aerarii Saturni ac / pariter vicem tuenti cons(ularis) / aquar(um), corr(ectori) Lucaniae et Britt(iorum), / [p]raef(ecto) annonae urbis Romae, / [c]uius diligentia ac provisione / [a]dventu ad urb(em) Romam d(omini) n(ostri) / [C]onstanti maximi victoris / [a]c triumf(atoris) semper Aug(usti) / [an]nona populo et fortissimo / [mil]iti adfatim subministrata est / ----- (?)'. See, on this inscription, Mazzarino (1974A).

<sup>29</sup> On the length of Constantius' visit, see Seeck (1919) 204: the emperor arrived on 28 April, and left on the 29th of the following month. See also Amm. Marc. 16.10.20.

<sup>30</sup> As discussed on p. 46.

<sup>31</sup> See references in Veyne (1976) 285 with n. 258 on pp. 749–50. On imperial visits and the arrangements they involved, see Millar (1977) 31–40.

<sup>32</sup> Cod. Theod. 7.8.5.

could also serve this purpose. The Bridge of Valentinian was constructed for the use of the Roman people, as well as for the celebration of imperial victories, as the inscriptions and fragments of bronze sculpture found in the Tiber show.<sup>33</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, the monument was not dedicated by the then urban prefect (368), but by the elder Symmachus, who had overseen the construction during his own term as prefect in 364–5, following the decision of the emperors themselves, ‘to the great joy of the citizens’.<sup>34</sup> Valentinian’s bridge commemorated the imperial *quinquennalia*, and was inscribed with vows for the *decennalia*. References to imperial victories were a crucial feature in panegyrics, such as those delivered by Symmachus’ son Quintus in Trier, in honour of the same Valentinian, around the time when the bridge was inaugurated in Rome.<sup>35</sup> Imperial celebrations were thus enshrined in the city space and made eternal by the inscriptions, architectural form, and sculpted decoration that gave shape and meaning to public monuments.<sup>36</sup>

Although Symmachus’ honour was exceptional, the participation of other officials (and especially prefects) was regularly acknowledged in imperial dedications. In 374, the emperors Valentinian I and Valens dedicated the building—or, more likely, restoration—of a forum, probably on the Palatine Hill.<sup>37</sup> The inscription was copied around 800 by the so-called *Anonymus Einsiedlensis*, who located it in the otherwise unknown ‘Forum Palatini’, between the Churches of S. Anastasia on the Palatine and S. Sabina on the Aventine. This was a prime location, in the vicinity of the imperial palace, and the fact that the emperors were not in Rome enhanced the importance of the man who, according to the inscription, supervised the works, the urban prefect Flavius Eupraxius.<sup>38</sup> Recording that the dedication of a monument took place ‘with the supervision’ (*curante*) of a prefect was a way of acknowledging his role, and represented an opportunity for Roman officials to publicize their standing before a Roman audience. Whilst confirming the pre-eminent role of their imperial commissioners, fourth-century dedications celebrated the participation of members of the local government in the building or restoration of a bridge, of the Tiber embankments, of aqueducts, of the structures related to the *cursus publicus*, and—in the first years of the fifth century—of the Aurelian Wall.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See *CIL* VI, 31402–12 and *LSA* 1820.

<sup>34</sup> See pp. 66–7, above. *CIL* VI, 31402 = *EDR* 130288; *CIL* VI, 31403 = *EDR* 138280; *CIL* VI, 31404 = *EDR* 138281. *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.3: ‘magna civium laetitia’.

<sup>35</sup> See Symm., *Or.* 1.14 and 2.10. See Lizzi Testa (2004) 453–4 for the date of the panegyrics.

<sup>36</sup> As argued by Woolf (1996).

<sup>37</sup> *CIL* VI, 1177 = *EDR* 114523: ‘Forum populo Romano suo [dono dederunt] / domini et principes nostri [Imp(eratores) Caes(ares)] / Valentinianus Valens et [Gratianus Aug(usti)], / curante Flavio Eupraxi[o], v(iro) c(larissimo), [praef(ecto) urbi]’.

<sup>38</sup> See, on this forum, Chioffi (1995B). See also Bauer (1997) 45.

<sup>39</sup> Bridge: *CIL* VI, 40770a–b = *EDR* 118900 and *EDR* 075982; embankments: *CIL* VI, 773 = *EDR* 137479 and *CIL* VI, 1242 = *EDR* 127585; aqueducts: *CIL* VI, 3866 = 31963 = *EDR* 112711 and *CIL* VI, 31564 = *EDR* 121962; *cursus publicus*: *CIL* VI, 1774 = *EDR* 110728; Walls: *CIL* VI, 1188–90 = *LSA* 1306–8.

The dedication of statues to emperors provided further opportunities for the symbiosis between local elites and central power. A law of 425 stated<sup>1</sup> that the dedication of an emperor's image required the presence of imperial officials to mark the occasion as festive.<sup>40</sup> This was probably true in earlier periods too, and aristocrats were certainly able to exploit such occasions to their own advantage. The large number of statues dedicated to Constantius II by the urban prefect Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus on the occasion of his visit to Rome, discussed in Chapter 3, served a double purpose, confirming to the Roman people the status of Orfitus and also his allegiance to the emperor—something particularly useful at a time when the city was recovering from its involvement in the civil conflicts ended with the defeat of Magnentius.<sup>41</sup> Statue monuments celebrated political relations, while at the same time embellishing the urban space and giving specific meanings to it. This is clear in the case of the Roman Forum, but other monumental complexes, such as imperial *thermae*, were also used as settings for these honours. In 365, the urban prefect Ceionius Rufius Volusianus was involved in a group of statue dedications in the Baths of Caracalla on the Aventine, one of the largest and most splendid spaces in Rome.<sup>42</sup> The complex already housed one of the city's most impressive sculptural collections, being decorated with 108 statues in niches and with sculptural masterpieces such as the so-called Farnese Hercules and the Farnese Bull.<sup>43</sup> Volusianus's dedications celebrated the emperor as 'the brightest and most pious' prince;<sup>44</sup> two other inscribed bases hailed the victories and triumphs of Valentinian and his brother Valens, respectively.<sup>45</sup>

Roman baths were important centres for social life, and as such an appropriate focus for the celebration of emperors as victorious rulers as well as benefactors.<sup>46</sup> In Rome, the emperors Diocletian and Maximian and, later, Constantine, built vast bathing complexes between the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>47</sup> Valentinian and Valens did not build their own *thermae*, but the statues dedicated by their representatives in Rome publicized to frequenters their rule over the city. Roman officials took personal credit for the embellishment of these spaces. As a dedication in the Baths of Caracalla records: 'Our lords Valentinian and Valens Augusti commanded [this statue] be placed and set up for the public embellishment. [This was] managed by Rufius Volusianus, of *clarissimus* rank, former praetorian prefect, urban prefect, judge in the imperial court of

<sup>40</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.4.1.

<sup>41</sup> See p. 113: *CIL* VI, 1161 = *LSA* 1278; *CIL* VI, 1162 = *LSA* 1279; *CIL* VI, 31395 = *LSA* 1360; *CIL* VI, 1168 = *LSA* 1099 was dedicated to the then Caesar Julian.

<sup>42</sup> See, on this complex and its construction, DeLaine (1997); also Yegül (1992) 146–62.

<sup>43</sup> For the decoration of the complex, see Marvin (1983).

<sup>44</sup> *CIL* VI, 1173a = *LSA* 1288: 'florentissimo et piissimo'.

<sup>45</sup> *CIL* VI, 1171 = *LSA* 1286 and *CIL* VI, 1172 = *LSA* 1287.

<sup>46</sup> As argued by DeLaine (1999) 8. <sup>47</sup> See Yegül (1992) 163–72 for these complexes.

appeal for the second time.<sup>48</sup> Here the emperors appear emphasizing their concern with the splendour of the city and its spaces, adding yet another statue to a complex that was already crowded with these monuments. However, the actual dedication was carried out by the prefect Volusianus himself, who went to the extent of recording part of his political career. Such 'epigraphic assertiveness' was decidedly unusual, especially in the context of an imperial dedication, and it might help us understand why Ammianus criticized this particular prefect for using building inscriptions to take credit for other people's work.<sup>49</sup>

Roman aristocrats occupying the urban prefecture enjoyed great visibility in city life. A law issued by the emperors Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian II in 376, regulating the relationship between the urban prefect and the *praefectus annonae*, established that: '[t]he prefecture of the *annona* shall... still hold distributions of bread when the urban prefect proceeds through the public, in recognition of his honour and standing, and according to ancient custom'.<sup>50</sup> The law does not refer to a specific festivity, but rather to any occasion in which the prefect moved through the public. Although it seems unlikely that every appearance of the prefect was accompanied by the distribution of bread, the vagueness of the language suggests that this was frequent. Ammianus brings out the spectacular (and dramatic) nature of prefectorial power in his narrative of the prefecture of Flavius Leontius (355–6).<sup>51</sup> During a riot started by an alleged scarcity of wine, the *plebs* gathered at the Septizodium, a monumental nymphaeum located between the Circus Maximus and the Colosseum, where they were confronted by Leontius. There, seated on his carriage and 'with splendid confidence', the prefect surveyed the crowd that threatened him 'like snakes'; he then ordered the arrest of a certain Petrus Valvomeres, a man conspicuous among the others for his red hair and stature, whom he recognized as the ringleader. Valvomeres was brutally beaten up in public, 'as if in a secluded tribunal' ('tamquam in iudiciali secreto'), and the crowd was dispersed.<sup>52</sup> Ammianus' narrative emphasizes the visual aspects of the drama, offering a precious insight into Rome's public life—and how it was perceived by contemporaries.<sup>53</sup> The prefect's administrative and judicial powers could not be separated from the dramatic manner in which they were exercised in public.

<sup>48</sup> *CIL* VI, 1170 = *LSA* 1285: '[DD(omini)] nn(ostri) Valentin[ianus] / [et] Valens Au[gusti], / [or] natui publico co[n]stitui / [l]ocarique iusseru[n]t. / Administrante Ru[fio] / Volusiano v[ir]o c[on]larissimo, ex pra[ef]ecto / praet(orio), prae(fecto) urbi iu[d]icans / iter(um) sacrar(um) cogn[it]ionum]'].

<sup>49</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.7.

<sup>50</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.6.7: 'Suis partibus annona praefectura moderatur, sed ita, ut ex veterum more praefecto urbis per publicum incedente honoris eius e loci gratia expansio panis habeatur'.

<sup>51</sup> See *PLRE* I, Leontius 22, for his prefecture.

<sup>52</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 15.7.3–5.

<sup>53</sup> See the analysis of Auerbach (1953) 50–76; and Matthews (1987).

Prefects had their own special chariot to move through the streets of the city, a visual reminder of the power and prestige of their office. At least from the reign of Gratian (375–88) onwards, they were entitled to ride in vehicles suitable to their rank.<sup>54</sup> In spite of some controversy, the official carriage was introduced with success, appearing as one of the symbols of the prefecture in the *Notitia dignitatum*.<sup>55</sup> When Cassiodorus composed his *formula praefecturae urbanae*, it was an essential element of the prefect's identity in the city: '[y]ou ride in your carriage (*carpentum*) through a populace of nobles, public vows follow you, great favours sound in a single voice [i.e. from the shouts of the crowd]'.<sup>56</sup> Whether moving from their homes to the prefecture or simply parading through the streets of the city followed by his retinue, the prefect was the embodiment of imperial (or royal) rule. For his short term in office, the man who filled that position carried its prestige, power, and visibility, with himself.

Holding an imperial office could be reason enough for the commemoration of an aristocrat's virtues. An edict of 321 states that 'just and vigilant judges' were allowed to be publicly acclaimed by the people.<sup>57</sup> A prefect was honoured with the dedication of a statue for restoring *insulae* belonging to the *corpus corariorum* to its original condition (*ad pristinum statum*); as the dedicatory inscription records it, he was following a regulation issued by Septimius Severus and Caracalla.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the most striking case of an imperial celebration appropriated by a Roman aristocrat is the promulgation of the *Theodosian Code* in 438. This was a solemn and official occasion, which—as will be discussed in Chapter 7—was concluded with a series of acclamations hailing the emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III, Aetius (then *magister militum* and actual ruler of the West), but also the consul Faustus and the urban prefect Paulus, both Roman senators.<sup>59</sup> Aristocrats were able to appropriate imperial occasions to celebrate their own standing in the city, and it was the very nature of imperial government that provided them with so many opportunities.

<sup>54</sup> See Symm., *Relat.* 4 and 20. See A. Chastagnol (1960) 203–5. *SHA, Alex. Sev.* 43.1 says that Alexander Severus allowed senators to use carriages ornamented with silver in the city, stressing the association between carriage and dignity (but see also *SHA, Aur.* 46.3, where we are told that it was Aurelian's decision). For a Constantinopolitan parallel, see *Cod. Theod.* 14.12.1. Ammianus (29.6.7) refers to a *iudiciale carpentum*, used by the governor of Pannonia, suggesting that other officials used other types of vehicles.

<sup>55</sup> The introduction of the carriage was criticized by the prefect Symmachus in 384: *Relat.* 4.2.

<sup>56</sup> Cass., *Var.* 6.4.6: 'Carpento veheris per nobilem plebem, publica te vota comitantur, favores gravissimi consona tecum voce procedunt'.

<sup>57</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.6. This could bring risks, as in the case of the prefect Cyrus, in Constantinople: *Chron. Pasch.* a. 450 (these events actually took place in 443). Cyrus was simultaneously praetorian prefect and urban prefect, see *PLRE II*, Cyrus 7.

<sup>58</sup> *CIL VI*, 1682 = *LSA 1394*: '...secundum leges principum priorum Imp(eratorum) {Val(eri)} Septimi Severi et M(arc) Aur(el)i Antonini Augg(ustorum) ...'.

<sup>59</sup> *Gesta senatus* 5.

### Institutional power and aristocratic commemoration

An appointment to public office provided members of the elite with many opportunities to enhance their standing in the *Urbs*. Every promotion represented greater access to social, economic, and political capital, being much coveted by ambitious men. These were precious and infrequent occasions.<sup>60</sup> A senator as successful as Quintus Aurelius Symmachus experienced long periods of *otium* between each new post: his official career started in the early 360s, as quaestors and praetor; he was governor of Lucania et Bruttium in 365, and was made count a few years later (when he spent some time in Valentinian's court in Trier); in 373, he was appointed proconsul of Africa Proconsularis, and urban prefect in 384. His crowning achievement was the consulship in 391.<sup>61</sup> Symmachus' career was exceptional because of its unusual success. Few of his peers reached a prefecture or the consulship like he did. Fewer still occupied positions of power as often as his contemporary Sextus Petronius Probus, praetorian prefect in 364, 366, 368–75, and in 383, as well as consul in 371.<sup>62</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that not all members of the *ordo* sought a public career, and that none viewed periods away from public service as unimportant or demeaning.<sup>63</sup> But for those with social and political ambitions, the benefits brought by an imperial post were clear.

The festivities surrounding the inauguration of a term in office were therefore an opportunity for aristocrats to publicize their political success and social power. The most prestigious position of all was the consulship, a post that brought little actual power, but immense prestige.<sup>64</sup> Late antique Rome served as the stage for fewer of these celebrations than in previous centuries, and this occasion became a rare moment in the life of its inhabitants. Emperors lived in other cities, and often took this office themselves or appointed prominent members of their court to it. In fact, it seems that the same period that was marked by a renewed importance of the ordinary consulship witnessed a decrease in the role played by the city of Rome in it. However, if the decline of Rome's centrality was true from the point of view of the court, it was not perceived in the same terms by the local elite. The panegyrist Claudian celebrated the inauguration of Honorius' sixth consulship in Rome as a return to its proper form and place:

The annual vote in the Campus Martius is not the habitual play, nor do we see a consul of a different race from the assembly nor a foreigner claiming fabricated rights. The palace, now our own, wears a native dress, and while Quirinus

<sup>60</sup> See the analysis of Matthews (1990) 12–31.

<sup>61</sup> *PLRE* I, Symmachus 4.

<sup>62</sup> *PLRE* I, Probus 5.

<sup>63</sup> See Jones (1964) 530; for the importance of the long periods of *otium*, see Cracco Ruggini (1986).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Bagnall et al. (1987), for the *fasti*. See also the essays collected in David (2007) and (especially for diptychs) Cameron (2013).

associates the people and *patres* with the troops, Mars renews the imperial suffrage of his own field.<sup>65</sup>

This panegyric was read in Rome, before an audience of senators, and it was probably composed with this Roman audience in mind.<sup>66</sup>

In spite of all the innovations in the political realities of the Empire, Roman aristocrats still presented themselves in a traditional way when reaching the consulship. The Roman Forum, with its temples, honorific monuments, and civic structures, remained a primary stage for these celebrations, as new consuls processed through the Sacra Via to the Senate house, followed by a cortège of senators.<sup>67</sup> This procession is attested for the brothers Probinus and Olybrius, consuls in 395, and for Flavius Boethius and Symmachus, also brothers, over a century later.<sup>68</sup> Romans—both aristocrats and the *populus*—were aware that this was a celebration of the senatorial order as a group. Senators accompanied consuls in their processions just as they accompanied emperors when entering the city. The final point of the procession, the Senate house, enhanced the prestige of the assembly before the population. After addressing the Senate in the *Curia*, and having been celebrated in panegyrics, the new consul would then proceed to the Forum of Trajan where, according to Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyric to Anthemius, he would bestow freedom on new citizens.<sup>69</sup> In other words, not only different parts of the city were involved, but also different groups within Roman society: the Senate, the people, and even slaves.

A highly successful politician that fell from grace, Boethius remarked that the consular procession of his sons Flavius Boethius and Symmachus, in 522, advanced *sub alacritate plebis*, attesting to the festive nature of the Kalends of January, a day of rejoicing when consuls took their office and when the new year (named after them) began.<sup>70</sup> Panegyrics read on these occasions made continuous recourse to mythological images and motifs, highlighting the broader conceptual significance of the celebration, as well as the unequalled position of the new consul.<sup>71</sup> The marble *opus sectile* panel depicting the procession in the Circus of Iunius Bassus, probably on the occasion of the inauguration of his consulship in 331 (Fig. 6.4), was originally displayed as part of the decoration of his house,

<sup>65</sup> Claudian, *De VI cos. Hon.* 5–10: 'neque enim campus sollennis et urna luditur in morem, species nec dissona coetu aut peregrina nitet simulati iuris imago. Indigenas habitus nativa palatia sumunt, et, patriis plebem castris sociante Quirino, Mars augusta sui renovat suffragia campi.' See also Sid. Apoll., *Carm.* 2.18–22, and his emphasis on the traditional elements involved in the election of consuls.

<sup>66</sup> Cameron (1970) 382–3. Claudian, *Pan. VI cos. Hon.* 603–4 makes the point that the Sacra Via was truly named when it led the Emperor back to his home.

<sup>67</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>68</sup> Probinus and Olybrius: Claudian, *Pan. Prob. et Olyb.* 226–33; Boethius and Symmachus: Boeth., *Cos. Phil.* 2.3.28–34.

<sup>69</sup> *Carm.* 2.544–8.

<sup>70</sup> An association noted by Meslin (1970) 53–70.

<sup>71</sup> On the place of panegyrics in ceremonies (especially *adventus*), see MacCormack (1976), esp. 41–54. See also the considerations of Rees (2002) 185–92.



accompanied by mythological images.<sup>72</sup> The inauguration of an aristocrat's term in office could thus be invested with religious associations. Symmachus mentions, in a letter to his son-in-law Nicomachus Flavianus, the many bad omens that were taking place in Rome, especially one involving the suffect consul of 401. In the day of the anniversary of the city, during the procession that marked the beginning of the consul's term, the horses that pulled his chariot threw him out of the car. The consul was then taken away with a broken leg, while still wearing the official insignia.<sup>73</sup> If the city was a sacred space, celebrations—even those that ended in disaster—reinforced the bonds between mortals and immortals.

The inauguration of ordinary consuls took place during the celebration of the Kalends of January, being associated with ritual practices that expressed wishes for future prosperity. The distribution of coins, for example, was seen as part of the exchange of gifts that marked these celebrations.<sup>74</sup> A letter from Symmachus describes how *solidi* were sent to distant friends as a form of marking with good auspices the year of his consulship (391). In this letter, Symmachus told his friend (whose name is not recorded) that the coin was a symbol of their mutual friendship, as well as an indication of his friend's status—suggesting that people of different ranks could receive different types of presents.<sup>75</sup> Gold and silver coins, medallions, and ivory diptychs were important souvenirs of an aristocrat's personal glory, marking not only the beginning of a consul's term, but also that of quaestors and praetors.<sup>76</sup>

Festivals articulated and expressed multiple relations in the city-space. Different conceptual categories, such as religious, sacred, and secular, as well as different agents, such as emperors, aristocrats, and the *populus*, were brought together in the course of these occasions. These were also opportunities for the establishment or consolidation of political and personal links. In a letter datable to 398, Symmachus offered one of his houses in Rome to Flavius Mallius Theodorus, who had been nominated consul for the following year, so that he might rest and start the New Year in an auspicious way.<sup>77</sup> Symmachus had asked Theodorus for help when

<sup>72</sup> Bassus was consul in 331: *PLRE* I, Bassus 14. See Chapter 6, for discussion of the house and its decoration.

<sup>73</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 6.40; on the suffect consul being responsible for games on 21 April, see Chastagnol (1960) 280. According to the *Fasti* of Polemius Silvius, 21 April was also the day when ordinary consuls left their office (see *InscrIt.*, p. 267). See also the comments of Callu (2003) 161, who notes that in the late empire there was a conceptual identification between ordinary and suffect consuls, in spite of the great difference in rank, citing Sid. Apoll., *Carm.* 5.5 and *Ep.* 8.6.6.

<sup>74</sup> See Meslin (1970) 76–9. For the religious (pagan) meaning of gifts, see Alföldy (1941), esp. 37–48 (for the relationship between contorniates and the New Year festival) and 57–84 (for pagan piety).

<sup>75</sup> *Ep.* 9.153: 'Sportulam consulatus mei et amicitiae nostrae et honori tuo debeo'. See also *Ep.* 2.81 and 7.76, for the same type of distinction in the case of distributions made on the occasion of a quaestorship.

<sup>76</sup> See e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 15.9.1–2; Symmachus' letters provide good evidence for the distribution of gifts on the occasion of his son's praetorship and quaestorship, see *Ep.* 2.81; 5.56; 7.76; 9.119. For the origins of the practice of distributing gifts, see Cameron (1998) 398–402.

<sup>77</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 5.11.

organizing the celebration of his own consulship, and so it is possible that he was trying to repay the favour.<sup>78</sup> We cannot be sure whether Theodorus accepted the offer of his Roman colleague, but we are well informed about the scale of preparations involved in the celebration of his consulship. Claudian mentions the animals, gladiators, athletes, musicians, artists, and acrobats involved in the festivities of 399.<sup>79</sup>

The games that attracted the crowds to the circus and the Colosseum at the accession of consuls, praetors, and quaestors were more than mere entertainment: they were oversized celebrations of power.<sup>80</sup> The letters sent by Symmachus during the preparation for his son's quaestorian and praetorian games are probably the most important source of information available for this aspect of late Roman ceremonial life.<sup>81</sup> Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus *iunior* was *quaestor candidatus* in 393, and as such was responsible for financing the games that marked the inauguration of his tenure in office.<sup>82</sup> In practice, it was up to his father, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, to organize the festivities. This involved asking for help from friends in Africa and even from Nicomachus Flavianus, then praetorian prefect and one of the main supporters of the usurper Eugenius (in power at that time). Flavianus had already helped in the appointment of Memmius Symmachus, and contributed to his games by presenting seven dogs imported from Scotland—an unusual attraction that proved to be extremely popular.<sup>83</sup> Symmachus actively sought the gratitude of the *populus Romanus*, going as far as acquiring slaves (again with the help of Flavianus) to donate to the stables of the circus factions.<sup>84</sup> The twenty-nine slaves bought to fight as gladiators killed themselves, and had to be replaced with properly trained fighters, since gladiatorial combats were the very essence of these celebrations.<sup>85</sup> The presents distributed during and after the games included silk robes and diptychs, one of which was ornated with gold and sent to the usurper Eugenius himself.<sup>86</sup> Not every aspect of the preparation was successful, however, and we read of a shipment of bears that was lost in the sea.<sup>87</sup>

Symmachus was especially concerned with courting popular favour for his son, whilst seeking to reinforce connections with his peers by sending invitations to senatorial friends to attend the games.<sup>88</sup> This can be seen in the letters written during the preparations for Memmius' praetorian games in 401. This particular

<sup>78</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 5.15, datable to 390.

<sup>79</sup> Claudian, *Pan. Fl. Theod.* 282–332.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Orlandi (2004) 545–63; more recently Puk (2014) 187–204 (for consular games).

<sup>81</sup> See, for Symmachus' correspondence concerning games, Callu (2008).

<sup>82</sup> On the *quaestor candidatus*, see Marcone (1996) 296–7, following SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 43.3–4. On Memmius Symmachus, see PLRE II, Symmachus 10.

<sup>83</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 2.77: 'Roma mirata est'. For Nicomachus' help in the appointment of Memmius, see *Ep.* 2.59. Magnillus, *vicarius Africae*, was also of great help: *Ep.* 5.20–2.

<sup>84</sup> *Ep.* 2.78.

<sup>85</sup> *Ep.* 2.46.

<sup>86</sup> For presents, see *Ep.* 5.22 and especially 2.81, to Nicomachus Flavianus, where Eugenius is called *dominus* and *princeps*.

<sup>87</sup> And for which he had to pay: *Ep.* 9.117. The letter is from 394, i.e. one year after the games.

<sup>88</sup> *Ep.* 5.46 for an invitation to a friend; 2.46, 77, and 78 for the people's favour.

group of letters covers a longer span of time, from 398 to 401, and shows the extent to which a powerful aristocrat could use his contacts in the court and in the provinces to assert his position in the *Urbs*. Different types of animals, including leopards, bears, crocodiles, antelopes, and gazelles were imported, an operation that involved asking for help from friends in various parts of the empire.<sup>89</sup> Actors were brought for spectacles in the circus and in the theatre, and even the intervention of the *magister militum* Stilicho was required to arrange permission for aquatic displays in the theatre (not specified) and for the use of the Amphitheatre.<sup>90</sup> Every step in an aristocrat's career was an opportunity for self-celebration in the city. Symmachus noted that the festivities he had organized on the occasion of his consulship (in 391) and of Memmius' quaestorship (in 393) had raised popular expectations for the games of 401. He observed, furthermore, that it was not proper for a magistrate to show a 'miserly disposition', and (paraphrasing Cicero) although private luxury was reprehensible, public splendour should be commended.<sup>91</sup>

The ability to bring as many people as possible together for his son's celebration was crucial for Symmachus' success.<sup>92</sup> This explains why permission for using the Colosseum for the celebration of Memmius' praetorian games (an unusual practice) was so eagerly sought. The Flavian Amphitheatre was, according to Symmachus, the only place where the Roman people would be able to enjoy their pleasures without constraints of space.<sup>93</sup> Its importance went far beyond its size, however: it was a prime venue for the representation of Roman social order and for the celebration of the city elite. This was done in a highly formalized way. At least since the beginning of the fourth century, senators had their names carved into the marble seating, reserving their spaces for their families. Although strictly speaking an imperial space, the amphitheatre was open to being physically appropriated by Rome's aristocratic families. As Silvia Orlandi showed, those inscriptions that survive belong to three distinct reorganizations of the seating arrangement—in the Constantinian period, in the second half of the fourth century, and in the late fifth century.<sup>94</sup> The Colosseum was a space where the senatorial order as a whole, and not just the sponsor of games (whether the emperor or an aristocrat), was celebrated before the eyes of the Roman people.

We do not know to what extent the praetorian games of Memmius Symmachus were exceptional in scale or wealth. Writing approximately twenty years after Memmius' praetorship, Olympiodorus of Thebes still thought it worthy to record the enormous sums of money spent by Symmachus, describing him as a 'senator

<sup>89</sup> *Ep.* 7.59 and 122 (leopards); 9.137 (bears); 9.141 (crocodiles); 9.144 (antelopes and gazelles).

<sup>90</sup> Actors: *Ep.* 6.33; Stilicho's help: 4.8 and 12. Specifically for the use of the Colosseum, see 4.8 and 7.110.

<sup>91</sup> *Ep.* 4.60.3.

<sup>92</sup> A point well noted by Lim (1999) 274–5.

<sup>93</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 4.8.2.

<sup>94</sup> Orlandi (2004) 550.

of middling wealth'.<sup>95</sup> We should be careful with this characterization; as Alan Cameron argued, the figure given (two thousand pounds of gold) indicates that the Symmachi were actually an exceptionally wealthy family, by any standards, and Olympiodorus' remarks should be seen as a biased assessment of Roman senatorial fortunes.<sup>96</sup> The importance of the family and its games might explain why so many letters dealing with these preparations were preserved in Symmachus' correspondence. They attest to his wealth and, most importantly, to his political connections, involving friends in high places and in distant provinces. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that most of the correspondence was edited by the main beneficiary of these celebrations, Memmius himself.<sup>97</sup>

The games organized by Symmachus also illustrate how personal commemorations could be turned into instruments of political competition and social differentiation within the elite. The quaestorship and especially the praetorship were the starting point of a senator's public life, and the expenditure involved in assuming such positions was a powerful deterrent to the ambitions of many families.<sup>98</sup> Families who tried to evade the obligation of fulfilling minor senatorial offices were forced to contribute, whereas others were ruined because of the ostentatious expenses required.<sup>99</sup> And yet, in the eyes of Symmachus, one should avoid the uniformity that plagued the spectacles offered in the city. It was for this reason that he had invested so much on his family's commemorations.<sup>100</sup> Splendid games brought popularity as well as a pre-eminent position in the Senate, and these were assets that status-conscious aristocrats could not ignore.<sup>101</sup>

Games displayed allegiance to the ruling emperor. When thanking Stilicho for his assistance in securing permission to use the Colosseum, Symmachus told him that the *populus* would be informed that it was Honorius who should be applauded and acclaimed.<sup>102</sup> As should be clear by now, the collusion of interests between Roman senators and the imperial court was an important aspect of late Rome's ceremonial life. Central and local authority were celebrated and legitimized together. Official permission to use the Colosseum was still required at the time of Theoderic. The Ostrogothic king (or more specifically Cassiodorus) expressed his distaste for the cruelty of games, whilst instructing the consul Flavius Maximus to celebrate them in the arena.<sup>103</sup> The letter to Maximus mentions popular enthusiasm for such forms of celebration, attesting to the

<sup>95</sup> Olymp., Frag. 41.2.

<sup>96</sup> See Cameron (1999B) 492–9.

<sup>97</sup> See *PLRE II*, Symmachus 10. On the role of Memmius, see Salzman (2011A) liv–lxii.

<sup>98</sup> See discussion in Chastagnol (1966) 61–70 ('*Le sumptus des préteurs*'). See more recently Giglio (2007).

<sup>99</sup> See *Cod. Theod.* 6.4.21.6–7, from 372, referring to a senatorial request for the establishment of limits to these expenses. This law was not addressed to Rome, but Symm., *Relat.* 8 thanks the emperors for putting an end to the 'ugly ostentatiousness' ('*foeda iactatio*') that marred senatorial celebrations. Amb., *De offic.* 2.21 dwells on the same issue. See Marcone (1996) 305–8 and Lim (1999) 272–3.

<sup>100</sup> *Ep.* 4.63; see also 9.126.

<sup>101</sup> Symm., *Rel.* 8.2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ep.* 4.12.2.

<sup>103</sup> Cass., *Var.* 5.42. Maximus was consul in 523: *PLRE II*, Maximus 20. On this letter, see commentary of I. Tantillo in Giardina (2014) 469–76.

political capital that could be derived from them. This is also the last reference to games in the Colosseum to survive from antiquity. Games were extremely expensive, and the series of restorations of the amphitheatre undertaken in the fourth and fifth centuries had not stopped the physical decline of the once splendid structure.<sup>104</sup>

### Public and private: statues and the display of power

Commemorations of political success and personal achievements were not limited to ephemeral festive occasions. Their most conspicuous testimony, the one that brought greater glory and—it was believed—a claim to immortality, were the honorific statues dedicated in different parts of the city to celebrate these moments. Statues transcended time by virtue of their materiality, while also expressing a very concrete and historical relationship between the individual honoured and the awarders of the monument.<sup>105</sup> Their iconography and dimensions celebrated the individuals represented, emphasizing concepts and political meanings considered relevant in different contexts: their commission, production, and exhibition. Crucially, statues helped to give meaning to and define the appearance of urban space.

The late antique period was marked by important developments in the ways portrait sculpture was used to display power and status, and this is particularly true in the case of aristocratic statues.<sup>106</sup> These changes were an expression of the transformations that redefined the senatorial elite from the time of Constantine onwards. In the early fourth century, new members of the expanded and more diverse *ordo senatorius* used these monuments as a form of consolidating their recently gained status and political success. Some time between 324 and 337, Caius Flavius Caelius Urbanus dedicated a statue to his father Saturninus (also known by his *signum*, Dogmatius), celebrating his promotion to the senatorial order (Fig. 4.1):

In honour of Dogmatius. To Caius Caelius Saturninus, of *clarissimus* rank, enrolled by request of the Senate in the rank of *consularis*, count of our lord the victorious Augustus Constantine, deputy of the urban prefecture, judge in the sacred court of appeal, twice deputy of the praetorian prefects in the city of Rome and for the (provinces of) Moesia, financial inspector for Italy, prefect of the *annona*, chief officer of the imperial patrimony, deputy chief officer of the imperial fisc, deputy chief officer of the imperial patrimony in Gaul, head of

<sup>104</sup> See Orlandi (1999) 249–63.

<sup>105</sup> See Ward-Perkins (2016) 35; on statues as honorific monuments, their meanings, and functions, see Ma (2013) 15–17.

<sup>106</sup> This subject has attracted great attention in recent years: see, for example, the studies collected in Bauer and Witschel (2007) and Smith and Ward-Perkins (2016).

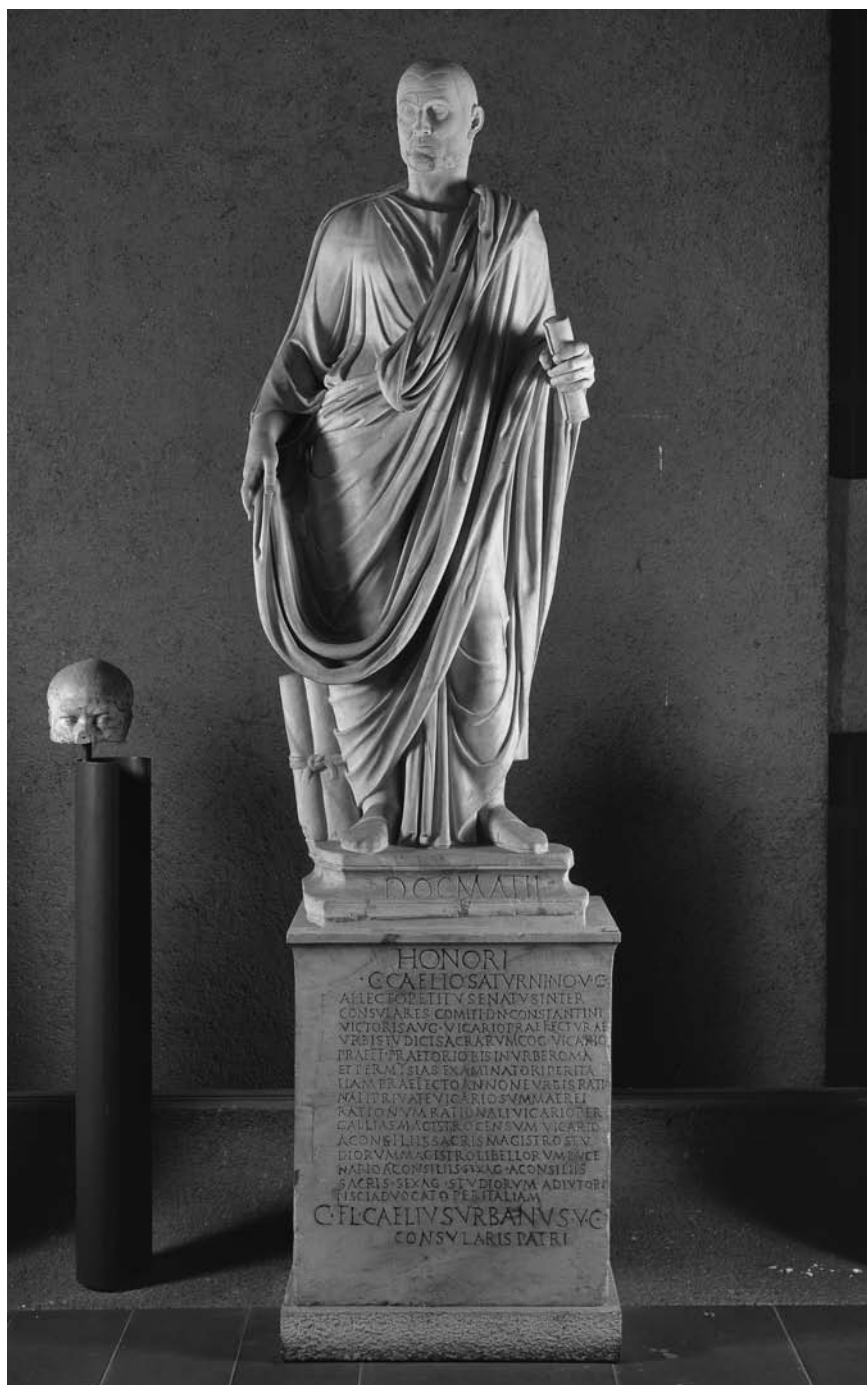


Fig. 4.1. Statue monument of C. Caelius Saturninus (Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. n. 10,493; 10,494).

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the census, deputy at the imperial council, head of the imperial records (*magister studiorum*), head of the office of petitions (*magister libellorum*), functionary of the imperial council receiving an annual salary of 200,000 *sestertii*, functionary of the imperial council receiving an annual salary of 60,000 *sestertii*, assistant functionary at the records office (*studiorum adiutori*) receiving an annual salary of 60,000 *sestertii*, advocate of the fisc in Italy. [Set up by] Caius Flavius Caelius Urbanus, of *clarissimus* and *consularis* rank, to his father.<sup>107</sup>

Urbanus' own statue was found next to his father's monument, suggesting that they were originally displayed together in the family's *domus*. The dedication is a striking example of a senator's pride in his father's achievements, listing his career in reverse order, from his promotion to the senatorial order down to the beginning of his public life as a lawyer working for the imperial fisc in Italy. Saturninus' career was very different from that of a Symmachus or a Probus, being based on service in the imperial bureaucracy. The head of the statue, showing a bearded adult man, employed an earlier portrait reworked in the fourth century.<sup>108</sup> The body also reused an earlier statue, wearing the traditional long toga and holding a scroll in the right hand.<sup>109</sup> Saturninus is shown wearing the closed leather shoes traditionally associated with the equestrian order, in contrast with the senatorial rank to which he had been promoted when the monument was commissioned. This is probably because the sculptor decided to make changes to the head only; however, there must have been many statues of senators available for reuse, and it is possible that the aim of the monument was to celebrate Saturninus' promotion from equestrian-level advocate to senatorial rank, in line with the inscription. Inscriptions and iconography associated the son with the achievements of his father, to whom he owed his own standing as *clarissimus*.

Clothing and style were used as tools for self-display, and aristocrats adopted new fashions as a way of expressing their connection with the court as well as their position in late Roman society. The statue of the 'old magistrate', datable to the late fourth to early fifth century, provides us with a good illustration of these

<sup>107</sup> CIL VI, 1704 = LSA 1266: 'Dogmatii / honori. / C(aio) Caelio Saturnino, v(iro) c(larissimo), / allectu petitu senatus inter / consulares, comiti d(omini) n(ostri) Constantini / victoris Aug(usti), / vicario praefecturae / urbis, iudici sacrarum cog(nitionum), vicario / praef(ectorum) praetorio bis: in / urbe Roma / et per Mysias, examinatori per Ita/liam (sic), praefecto annon(a)e urbis, ratio(nali) privat(a)e, vicario summae rei / rationum, rationali vicario per / Gallias, magistro censu(u)m, vicario / a consiliis sacris, magistro stu(diorum), magistro libellorum, duce(nario) a consiliis <sacris>, sexag(enario) a consiliis / sacris, sexag(enario) studiorum adiutori, / fisci advocato per Italiam. / C(aius) Fl(avius) Caelius Urbanus, v(ir) c(larissimus), / consularis patri.' It is possible that, although found next to each other, base and statue did not go together: see comments in LSA 1266.

<sup>108</sup> Stylistic analysis is supported by Constantine's imperial titles mentioned in the inscription: he adopted the epithet 'victor' after his victory over Licinius in 324, see Kienast (1996) 298–303. The inscription refers to Constantine as still alive (i.e. before May 337).

<sup>109</sup> Lenaghan (2016) 270–1.



**Fig. 4.2.** The ‘old magistrate’  
(Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale  
Montemartini, MC896).

Photo © Roma—Sovrintendenza Capitolina  
ai Beni Comunali.

developments (Fig. 4.2).<sup>110</sup> It was discovered in 1879, broken into pieces and reused in a wall blocking one of the niches of the so-called ‘Temple of Minerva Medica’, on the Esquiline.<sup>111</sup> A nearly identical statue of a younger man, probably his son, was found with it.<sup>112</sup> The identity of these men is unknown; at least some of the *horti* on the Esquiline were imperial property in the third century, but it is widely accepted that they had passed into private hands in the course of the fourth century, when the ‘Temple’ (actually an elaborate nymphaeum) was built—but there is no indication of its owner.<sup>113</sup> The statue shows an older man in a standing position, holding a *mappa*, the piece of cloth used to signal the start of races in the circus, in the right hand. He is celebrated in a moment of political glory, most likely the inauguration of a prestigious term in office. This message was complemented by the choice of clothing: the old magistrate is shown wearing a distinctive style of dress that only appeared in the late fourth century, consisting of a long-sleeved tunic, a *colobium* (a lighter, sleeveless tunic), a short toga, and a cross-strapped boot-like shoe.<sup>114</sup> This fashion was developed in the late fourth century,

<sup>110</sup> See LSA 1068 for the statue, with bibliographic references. See also Gehn (2012) 525–31.

<sup>111</sup> See, for the context of discovery, Coates-Stephens (2001) 221–5. See also Cima (1995).

<sup>112</sup> LSA 1069.

<sup>113</sup> As discussed in Guidobaldi (2014). See also Purcell (2007).

<sup>114</sup> See Gehn (2012) 58–63 for a discussion of these elements.



and remained associated with high imperial office and especially with the Theodosian court. Although common in the East, this type of costume was rare in the western empire (these are the only examples known). It is certain that the statues, with this particular type of costume, were specially commissioned for these two aristocrats, highlighting their political standing and close connection with imperial rule.<sup>115</sup>

Rome housed the largest collection of honorific portraits in the whole Mediterranean.<sup>116</sup> Statues were dedicated by different groups and agents, from local guilds to high imperial officials, celebrating deities, rulers, politicians, and cultural and athletic heroes. During the Principate, emperors and members of their families had dominated the dedication of these monuments in the capital, being frequently honoured in the most prestigious public spaces.<sup>117</sup> Senators were also honoured with statues in public and private contexts, but in smaller numbers.<sup>118</sup> It has also been observed that non-imperial members of the elite honoured in public areas were usually men closely associated with the palace, such as generals and court officials.<sup>119</sup> This is the case of the Forum of Trajan, for example, a complex designed to celebrate imperial power but that was frequently used as a setting for aristocratic monuments.<sup>120</sup> As the evidence collected in the *Last Statues of Antiquity* database shows, emperors and their families continued to receive the largest share of statue dedications in late antiquity, being honoured in 48 per cent of the surviving dedications made in Rome between 270 and 535.<sup>121</sup> What is remarkable, however, is the fact that aristocrats were honoured in approximately 43 per cent of the surviving dedications (112 out of 258): a very high number that contrasts with what is known for the early empire. More importantly, the place occupied by aristocratic monuments among the city's population of statues became more pronounced with the passing of time. From the middle of the fourth century onwards, aristocrats were honoured with statues more frequently than emperors and their families, reversing the early imperial situation.<sup>122</sup> As the number of statues produced and dedicated in Rome declined, awarders of these monuments opted to celebrate the local elite rather than the imperial power itself.<sup>123</sup>

The spatial context of these dedications is also relevant. Senatorial *domus* were a common setting for these honours, as we will see in Chapter 6, with forty-eight dedications most likely coming from domestic contexts. Fifty of the monuments awarded to senators come from public contexts like the Forum of Trajan and the

<sup>115</sup> See the analysis of Smith (2016) 17–19. <sup>116</sup> See Machado with Lenaghan (2016) 121.

<sup>117</sup> As observed by Eck (1996) 311; see also Weisweiler (2012A) 322.

<sup>118</sup> As discussed by Orlandi (1995); see also Eck (1997A) 78. <sup>119</sup> G. Alföldy (2001B).

<sup>120</sup> As noted by G. Alföldy (2001B) 23–4; see also Chenault (2012) 118–22.

<sup>121</sup> i.e. 124 out of 258 inscribed dedications that can be identified included in the *Last Statues of Antiquity* database (excluding ninety-three dedications whose honorand cannot be identified).

<sup>122</sup> As shown in Machado with Lenaghan (2016) 125; see also Ward-Perkins and Machado (2013) 357–9.

<sup>123</sup> See, for the decline of the statue habit in Rome and Italy, Machado (2010B).

Roman Forum, the main areas for this type of honour.<sup>124</sup> More than the number of statues, however, it is the distinguished character of these honours that made them special. In 377, Lucius Aurelius Avianius Symmachus was honoured with a gilded statue in the Forum of Trajan, as recorded in its dedicatory inscription:

[Statue of] Phosphorius. To Lucius Aurelius Avianius Symmachus, of the senatorial order, urban prefect, consul, legate of the praetorian prefect in Rome and in the neighbouring provinces, prefect of the annona of the city of Rome, higher pontiff, member of the college of *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, responsible on many occasions for embassies to deified emperors following the wishes of the senatorial order, whose opinion in the Senate was usually the first to be asked, who enriched with authority, prudence, and eloquence the seat of this great order. The gilded statue that the great Senate obtained from our Lords Augusti through frequent petitions, and that our victorious emperors commanded to be set up with a list of his merits; and to this honour their [i.e. imperial] judgement also added that a further statue of equal splendour be placed in Constantinople. [On the left side of the base] Dedicated on the third day before the Kalends of May, during the fourth consulship of our Lord Gratian and Merobaudes.<sup>125</sup>

Like other statues in the Forum of Trajan, Symmachus' was commissioned by the emperors, at the request of the Senate—the most illustrious awarders of such monuments in the empire.<sup>126</sup> More than his many imperial appointments or the inauguration of a bridge, this was a monument meant to last forever, an honour made more impressive by being set up both in Rome and in Constantinople. Honorific statues celebrated the Roman senatorial aristocracy as a group, asserting their dominating role in the cityscape. Values and virtues shared by its members, such as education, ancestry, and public service, were repeated in inscriptions placed in public and private spaces.<sup>127</sup> Besides social cohesion, however, statue-monuments were also used to single out the individuals thus honoured as

<sup>124</sup> Chenault (2012); also Bauer (1996) 94–5.

<sup>125</sup> *CIL* VI, 1698 = *LSA* 342: 'Phosphorii. // Lucio Aur(elio) Avianio Symmacho, v(iro) c(larissimo), / praefecto urbi, consuli, pro praefectis / praetorio in Urbe Roma finitimisque / provinciis, praefecto annonae Ur/bis Romae, pontifici maiori, quindecimviro sacris faciundis, multis legationibus / pro amplissimi ordinis desideriis / apud divos principes functo, qui / primus in senatu sententiam rogari solitus auctoritate, prudentia atque / eloquentia pro dignitate tanti ordinis magnitudinem loci eius inplevit auro inlustrem statuum quam / a dominis Augustisque nostris senatus / amplissimus decretis frequentibus inpetrabat, idem triumphatores principes / nostri constitui adposita oratione iussurunt, quae meritorum eius ordinem / ac seriem contineret, quorum perenne / iudicium tanto muneri hoc quoque addidit ut alteram statuem pari splendore etiam apud Constantinopolim / conlocaret. // Dedicata III Kalendas Maias / domino nostro Gratiano IIII et Merobaudē conlocat(us).'

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, *CIL* VI, 1721 = *LSA* 314; *CIL* VI, 1724 = *LSA* 319; *CIL* VI, 1683 = *LSA* 1395 and *CIL* VI, 41380 = *LSA* 405. A few statues were dedicated by emperors only: *CIL* VI, 1764 = *LSA* 1408; *CIL* VI, 1727 = *LSA* 1435; *CIL* VI, 41347 = *LSA* 1581.

<sup>127</sup> The fundamental study is G. Alföldy (1982); see also Niquet (2000) and more recently Chenault (2012) 108–15.

outstanding presences in the city's social and political life, and Symmachus is a good example of this. Only a small minority of aristocrats merited these expensive monuments, and it is not a coincidence that, from the beginning of the fifth century onwards, these honours were dominated by men occupying the highest and most prestigious offices (and therefore closely associated with the court), in spite of the virtual disappearance of imperial dedications.<sup>128</sup>

Every year, a new imperial appointee would ride on the prefectural *carpentum*, instilling fear and awe into the Roman *plebs*. In the same way, praetors, quaestors, and consuls celebrated their own power as well as the prestige and social dominance of their group. Not all senators were able (or even interested) to compete for social recognition with the same enthusiasm as the Symmachi, nor would they all reach the highest magistracies in the city. Not all of them would be honoured with statues either. These were ambitions that only a few of them could harbour. This does not mean that self-display was limited to the most ambitious members of the senatorial class, however. There were many other special occasions available to the powerful in late antique Rome. The personal life of an aristocrat was deeply interconnected with the ceremonial life of the city, and this is what we must explore now.

### Personal Commemorations and Public Standing

Roman aristocrats affirmed their social standing on a daily basis, and not only during official celebrations. Since the Republic, the very act of moving through the city, whether to attend a meeting at the Forum or to visit a friend, had been held as an opportunity for a grand display of wealth and power, and this remained true in late antiquity.<sup>129</sup> Ammianus describes, in one of his critical commentaries about life in the city, the appearance of aristocrats moving through the streets of Rome:

Other men, taking great pride in coaches higher than common and in ostentatious finery of apparel, sweat under heavy cloaks, which they fasten about their necks and bind around their very throats, while the air blows through them because of the excessive lightness of the material; and they lift them up with both hands and wave them with many gestures, especially with their left hands, in order that the over-long fringes and the tunics embroidered with party-coloured threads in multiform figures of animals may be conspicuous.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 1783 = *LSA* 1247 to Flavianus, praetorian prefect (431); *CIL* VI, 1725 = *LSA* 1407 to Draucus, urban prefect (425–50); and *CIL* VI, 1716a–c = *LSA* 1419–21 to Basilius, consul and urban prefect (484).

<sup>129</sup> See, on this topic, the essays collected in Östenberg, Malmberg, and Bjørnebye (2015), especially Östenberg (2015).

<sup>130</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 14.6.9 (transl. Rolfe).

Senators did not walk alone: as the fourth-century historian notes in another passage, their every outing was accompanied by a multitude of slaves, eunuchs, attendants, clients and friends—the entire *domus*—in a carefully choreographed occasion: ‘... those who have charge of a city household (*urbana familia*), made conspicuous by wands grasped in their right hands, carefully and diligently draw up the array’.<sup>131</sup> Ammianus’ description was clearly a satire, carefully crafted according to his highly critical picture of the city’s elite. But the same elements were also highlighted in Jerome’s praise of his friend Pammachius: ‘It is not a small thing for a noble, a man of eloquence, a man of wealth, to avoid the company of the powerful on the street, but to mingle with the crowd, to keep close to the poor, to associate with simple men, from prince to become one of the people’.<sup>132</sup> Female aristocrats also took part in this form of display. Ammianus noted that women imitated their husbands, parading in litters with their heads veiled, whereas Jerome mentioned the presence of attendants, while criticizing this form of behaviour.<sup>133</sup> Aristocratic ‘power walks’ (as Ida Östenberg called them) reinforced social hierarchies, distancing members of the elite from the people and presenting a coherent picture of late Roman society, incorporating the senator, his household, and the observing public.<sup>134</sup> This was a very selective picture, in which senators were placed front and centre, but the fact that it could be repeated on a daily basis, in different parts of the city, contributed to make it more persuasive.

The daily celebration of aristocratic power was magnified during the commemoration of personal occasions. In 400, Jerome wrote a letter to his friend Oceanus about the life and death of the Christian lady Fabiola, in which he described her baptism.<sup>135</sup> According to his account, the ceremony took place before Easter, in the area of the episcopal basilica in the Lateran (Jerome does not specify the precise spot), where Constantine had built a magnificent baptistery.<sup>136</sup> There, before the eyes of the entire city (*‘tota urbe spectante Romana’*), Fabiola endured penitence for her sins, ‘... the bishop, the presbyters, and the entire *populus* crying with her, her dishevelled hair, pale face, squalid hands, the dirty head lowered’.<sup>137</sup> He continued:

She laid bare her wound to all, and Rome in tears beheld the scar on her pale body. She had her flank exposed, her head uncovered, her mouth shut. She did not enter the church of the Lord, but outside the camp with Maria the sister of

<sup>131</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.17 (transl. Rolfe).

<sup>132</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 66.6: ‘... Non est parum virum nobilem, virum disertum, virumque locupletem potentium in plateis vitare comitatum, miscere se turbis, adhaere pauperibus, rusticis copulari, de principe vulgum fieri’.

<sup>133</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.16; Jerome, *Ep.* 22.16 and 54.13.

<sup>134</sup> Östenberg (2015).

<sup>135</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77; on Fabiola, see *PLRE* I, Fabiola and *PCBE* 2 (*Italie*), *Fabiola* 1.

<sup>136</sup> See, for the area, Liverani (2004B), with p. 21 for Jerome; on Constantine’s baptistery, see Brandenburg (2005) 37–54; also Brandt (2012) 33–85. The Constantinian baptistery survives as San Giovanni in Fonte.

<sup>137</sup> *Ep.* 77.4.

Moses she sat apart, so that the priest who had expelled her might invite her back in. She descended from the throne of her luxuries, 'took the millstone and ground the flour', and with her bare feet she crossed the stream of tears. She sat on the coal on fire, and this was her support.<sup>138</sup>

In Jerome's account, the initiation of this one Christian lady was turned into a public ceremony that involved the whole city, in which the presence of all—including the other catechumens—was subsumed into the celebration of one aristocrat. The ceremony of baptism was an official occasion in the Church's calendar, presided over by the bishop in a splendid complex built by the emperor to celebrate the glory of God and his representative on Earth. The fact that Jerome's letter could be structured in this way, focusing his account exclusively on Fabiola, not even mentioning the bishop's name, attests to the visibility of aristocratic commemorations in Rome's public life. It highlights, furthermore, the complex and porous boundaries between public and private in late antique Rome.

There are no other detailed accounts of aristocrats being baptized in Rome. It is clear, however, that these were occasions for the display of their power and the assertion of their standing within their religious community—and even beyond it. It is the case of the famous pagan rhetor Marius Victorinus, who converted to Christianity and, after being offered the possibility of being baptized in private, chose to do it before the whole congregation, attracting enormous public attention.<sup>139</sup> Celebrations of baptism could thus serve both as a testimonial to one's faith and as an occasion for social display. This is probably true for all members of the Christian community, but it is particularly evident in the case of its senatorial elite.

### The commemoration of the dead

Apart from the official celebrations discussed above, funerals are the best documented occasions in the lives of the senatorial elite. Funerals are both family and personal commemorations that articulate issues as varied as individual piety, social standing, and the topography of the city.<sup>140</sup> The different rites that preceded and followed a burial—the public mourning, the funerary procession, a funerary banquet—had played an important role in the social and political strategies of the senatorial elite since the early history of the city. Although still observed during

<sup>138</sup> *Ep.* 77.5: 'Aperuit cunctis vulnus suum, et decolare in corpore cicatricem flens Roma conspexit. Dissuta habuit latera, nudum caput, clausum os. Non est ingressa ecclesiam Domini, sed extra castra cum Maria sorore Moysi separata consedit, ut quam sacerdos eiecerat, ipse revocaret. Descendit de solio deliciarum suarum, accepit molam, fecit farinam, et discalciatis pedibus transivit fluentia lacrimorum. Sedit super carbonem ignis. Hi ei fuere in adiutorium.'

<sup>139</sup> See Aug., *Conf.* 8.2 for Victorinus and his conversion; *PLRE* I, Victorinus 11 for his career.

<sup>140</sup> See, on these issues, Toynbee (1971) 43–61; and Bodel (1999). Metcalf and Huntington (1991) is a useful introduction to these issues.

the imperial period, these practices lost prominence to the much grander commemorations of members of the imperial family.<sup>141</sup> However, as emperors distanced themselves from the *Urbs* and had their funerary rites celebrated elsewhere, members of the city's powerful families were able to reclaim a visibility that had not been enjoyed by their peers since the time of Augustus. This renewed splendour can be appreciated in Jerome's narrative of the commemoration awarded to Fabiola after her death.<sup>142</sup> The people of Rome marched in thousands to attend her funerary procession; Jerome mentions the groups (*turmas*) that preceded the cortege, and also the 'waves of the multitude arranged in bands' that surrounded it.<sup>143</sup> The city itself, with its monuments and spaces, was incorporated into the celebration: the temples were shaken by the chanting, the squares, porticoes, and roofs of houses were witnesses to the procession. As Jerome observed, 'on that day Rome saw its people united as one'.<sup>144</sup> According to the Christian preacher, the public commotion and general grief made this occasion grander than the triumphs of Republican generals.

Claims about the involvement of the entire populace and the spectacular character of these ceremonies is something that we find in accounts of other high-profile funerals. The Christian aristocrat and urban prefect Iunius Bassus died while in office in 359, and the inscription on his sarcophagus (now in the Treasury of S. Peter) records the commemoration held for his funeral:

While governing the people of his city and the house of the Senate, he died, to the everlasting tears of the city. Nor were his own servants allowed to carry his bier, but it was the burden of the Roman people, vying <for the honour>. Everyone wept, married women, children and old men. Then too the reverent Senate wept, discarding their togas. Then too the highest buildings of Rome seemed to weep, then too the very houses along the route made lament. Yield, high honours of the living; it is yet a higher distinction that death brings him.<sup>145</sup>

As Alan Cameron observed, this is the description of a magnificent public funeral, including a *iustitium*. Traditionally, this involved the interruption of business as

<sup>141</sup> See discussion in Flower (1996) 223–69; see also Price (1987); Wesch-Klein (1993); and Benoist (2005) 103–46.

<sup>142</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77.11.

<sup>143</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77.11: 'praecedentium turmas, et catervatim exsequiis eius multitudinem fluctuantem'.

<sup>144</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77.11: 'tunc suos in unum populus Roma conspexit'.

<sup>145</sup> *CIL* VI, 41341a = *EDR* 109751, ll. 7–16 (re-edited and translated by Cameron (2002) 288–90): '[Hic mo]derans plebem / patriae sedemque se[natu] / [ur]bis perpetuas occidit ad lacrimas. / [Nec l]icuit famulis domini gestare feretrum, / [c]ertantis populi sed fuit illud onus. / [Fl]e[vit] turba omnis, matres puerique senesque, / [fl]e[vit] et abiectis tunc pius ordo togis. / [Flere vide]bantur tunc et fastigia Romae, / [ipsaque tun]c gemitus edere tecta viae. / [Cedite sublimes] spirantum cedite honores, / [celsius est culmen] mors quod huic tribuit.'

usual, as well as the suspension of law courts, entertainment, and religious activities.<sup>146</sup> The ordinary passing of time came to a halt, as different spaces of the city were mobilized for the commemoration of this powerful aristocrat.

The combination of public and personal elements in aristocratic celebrations can be seen in the funeral of the pagan prefect Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. Symmachus, when urban prefect in 384, communicated to the court the news of the death of the then designated consul. He mentioned the public commotion and general outcry, something that was also observed by Jerome (who harboured a bitter hatred for Praetextatus) in a private letter: 'the entire *Urbs* was shaken'.<sup>147</sup> Symmachus also noted the refusal of the people to attend the spectacles in the theatre. This is particularly striking because Praetextatus died in the last weeks of the year, a time traditionally dedicated to games and celebrations. In another report to the court, Symmachus transmitted to the emperor the senatorial request that statues be set-up in his friend's honour, so that his virtuous behaviour could serve as an example for later generations.<sup>148</sup> A fragmentary base for a statue found in the Roman Forum confirms that Praetextatus received public honours after his death (or very shortly before that), but the identity of the person or institution who dedicated it is not preserved.<sup>149</sup> In another dispatch to the court, the prefect announced that he was going to send a copy of the public acclamations made on the occasion of Praetextatus' death.<sup>150</sup> The strong official character of the occasion might explain why the author of the *Carmen contra paganos* asked, in his diatribe against an unnamed pagan prefect, 'who caused this *iustitium* for you, most beautiful Rome?'<sup>151</sup> Lellia Cracco Ruggini convincingly argued that the prefect in question was the praetorian prefect Praetextatus himself, in which case this passage should be read as referring to his death.<sup>152</sup> The word *iustitium* is a reference to the official period of mourning that followed the death of the prefect.

The celebration of the memory of Praetextatus did not stop there. A posthumous statue was set up at his home, commemorating his outstanding political career.<sup>153</sup> He was honoured again three years later, in 387, this time for his public offices and for his pagan priesthoods.<sup>154</sup> He was also commemorated in

<sup>146</sup> See Cameron (2011) 287–9. On the definition of *iustitium*, see Wesch-Klein (1993) 91–101 and Kleinfeller (1919). This honour had been awarded to Constantine in Rome, at the news of his death: Eus., VC 4.69.1; see comments in Av. Cameron and Hall (1999) 346.

<sup>147</sup> See Symm., *Relat.* 10.2, with comments in Vera (1981) 100; see also Jerome, *Ep.* 23.3: 'Urbs universa commota est'. See Cameron (2011) 317–19 on reactions to the news.

<sup>148</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 12.

<sup>149</sup> *CIL* VI, 1779a = *LSA* 1409; the inscription mentions his praetorian prefecture, a post that he held at the time of his death. Chenault (2012) 125 makes the interesting suggestion that a fragmentary *oratio principis* (*CIL* VI, 41357 = *EDR* 093589) datable to the fourth century found in the Roman Forum could be part of Praetextatus' monument.

<sup>150</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 24.3.

<sup>151</sup> *Carmen contra paganos* 32: 'quis tibi iustitium incussit, pulcherrima Roma?'

<sup>152</sup> Demonstrated by Cracco Ruggini (1979) and (1998). See more recently Cameron (2011) 273–319.

<sup>153</sup> *CIL* VI, 1777 = *LSA* 1472; the identity of the awarder is not mentioned.

<sup>154</sup> *CIL* VI, 1778 = *LSA* 1473, probably also from his house.

conjunction with his wife Paulina in an altar, probably set up in a private context. The altar was inscribed on its four sides. The first side contained posthumous dedications to the couple. Each of the remaining sides were inscribed with a different poem: two in honour of Paulina, and presumably written by Praetextatus; the third, the longest of the group, addressed by her to her husband.<sup>155</sup> The poems praise the couple, placing special emphasis on their moral and spiritual qualities, making this altar the most personal of all monuments dedicated to Praetextatus. We cannot be certain whether the altar and the statues were originally set up in the same spatial context, but they probably came from the couple's *domus*.

Just as religious affiliation was not an impediment when it came to the celebration of personal power, criticism of these grand occasions also transcended religious divisions. The pagan emperor Julian had criticized such demonstrations in a law issued in Antioch in 363, contrasting true grief with ostentatious parades of corpses through the streets of a city.<sup>156</sup> Christian writers, like Augustine, also condemned expensive burials as being of more importance to the living than to the soul of the dead.<sup>157</sup> This did not prevent a deeply committed Christian aristocrat like Pammachius from organizing a lavish meal for the poor of Rome in the *atrium* of the Basilica of S. Peter, in honour of his deceased wife.<sup>158</sup> This was a most traditional ceremony, both from an aristocratic and a Christian point of view: members of the Roman elite traditionally offered banquets to mark the passing of important family members; Christians celebrated *refrigeria*, communal meals in memory of the dead.<sup>159</sup> Pammachius did it in a new and very conspicuous setting, however, attracting a large crowd to what was in essence both a religious celebration and personal self-display. In fact, the religious developments that marked the late antique period seem to have offered new opportunities for aristocrats to celebrate their own standing in Roman society.

### Family memorials and public monuments in Christian contexts

Throughout Roman history, members of the senatorial class used funerary monuments as a primary way of celebrating their achievements and social standing.<sup>160</sup> In the imperial period, aristocratic tombs were built along the roads that crossed the suburbs, as well as in the *villae* around the *Urbs*.<sup>161</sup> Although traditional burial sites and monuments probably remained important during the late antique

<sup>155</sup> CIL VI, 1779 (+ pp. 4757–9) = EDR 121930; see also Cameron (2011) 301–5 and Kahlos (2002) 172–8.

<sup>156</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.15.5.1.

<sup>157</sup> See e.g. Aug., *Civ. Dei* 1.2; Rebillard (2003).

<sup>158</sup> Described by Paul. Nola, *Ep.* 13.11; see discussion in Grig (2006).

<sup>159</sup> On aristocratic banquets, see Veyne (1976) 392–3; also D'Arms (1999). On *refrigeria*, see Hofmann (2011).

<sup>160</sup> See, for a brief survey, Patterson (2000) 264–7.

<sup>161</sup> See discussion in Purcell (1987B); specifically for the imperial period: Feraudi-Gruénais (2005).



period, our evidence for their use declined dramatically in the first decades of the fourth century (if not earlier). Suburban villas continued being used as burial grounds, but the surviving graves datable to this period are markedly humble, mostly lacking decoration or inscriptions.<sup>162</sup> The progressive decay, destruction, and spoliation of the grander suburban tombs (pagan and Christian alike) in the late antique and subsequent periods certainly contributed to this imbalance. As a result, our information concerning the commemorative strategies of the senatorial elite is severely biased towards monuments located in Christian complexes, excluding from our picture the large proportion of fourth-century aristocrats who did not convert as well as those who chose to be buried in more traditional spaces. Bearing this in mind, the evidence available does illuminate the shifting priorities of this social group, as a growing number of senators embraced the new religion, at the same time that the Church developed its own network of burial and cult spaces, and as such it merits special attention.

Although funerary monuments continued to play a crucial role in the way powerful families presented themselves to their contemporaries in Christian contexts, the appearance, architecture, and location of these structures experienced important developments from the third century onwards.<sup>163</sup> These involved the expansion and spread of underground cemeteries, catacombs, used by members of different religious communities; and, starting in the early fourth century, the appearance and increased importance of a network of Christian funerary basilicas around the Suburbs.<sup>164</sup> The so-called circus-shaped basilicas, vast elliptical buildings that served as covered cemeteries, were built on top of or next to catacombs where important martyrs were worshipped, making it possible for believers to be buried in proximity to the grave of a saint. They included the Basilica Apostolorum on the Via Appia (Fig. 4.3), the Basilica of S. Pietro e Marcellino on the Via Labicana, of S. Agnese on the Via Nomentana, and the Basilica of S. Lorenzo on the Via Tiburtina, among others.<sup>165</sup> Being buried next to the saints—*ad sanctos*—became an important element in the funerary culture of the period, bringing prestige as well as spiritual rewards.<sup>166</sup>

Influenced by these developments, as well as by the larger number of aristocrats converted to Christianity, Christian epigraphic practice also experienced important developments during this period. Late Roman epitaphs frequently make reference to the physical proximity to the grave of a saint, emphasizing the importance of this spatial link.<sup>167</sup> Aristocrats, like other groups in the Christian

<sup>162</sup> Di Gennaro and Griesbach (2003).

<sup>163</sup> See Borg (2007) and (2013).

<sup>164</sup> On catacombs, see Fiocchi Nicolai and Guyon (2006); also Bodel (2008A). See, for a good overview of these developments, Fiocchi Nicolai (2001).

<sup>165</sup> A development analysed by Fiocchi Nicolai (2001) 55–8; also La Rocca (2000), for a discussion of its architecture.

<sup>166</sup> Brown (1981) 86–105 discusses these issues in their broader cultural context. See also Yasin (2009) 69–91 for other regions of the Mediterranean; for Rome, see Nieddu (2003).

<sup>167</sup> See Carletti (2008) 86–90; De Santis (2010) 97–102.

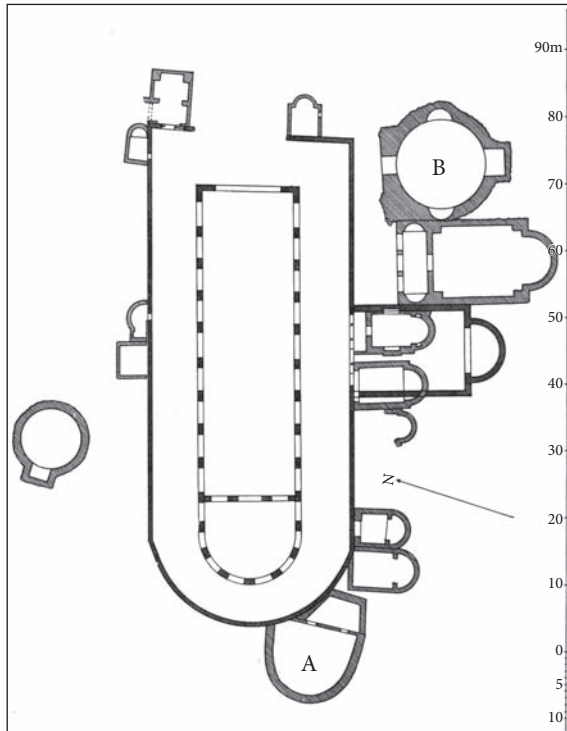


Fig. 4.3. The Basilica Apostolorum.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from F. Tolotti, *Memorie degli Apostoli in Catacumbas: rilievo critico della Memoria e della Basilica Apostolorum al III miglio della Via Appia* (Collezione Amici delle Catacombe, XIX), Città del Vaticano 1953, Tav. 1, with the publisher's kind permission.

community, also took part in this practice, seeking association with these special patrons, more powerful than themselves. The *vir spectabilis* Maurianus, for example, was buried in the Basilica of S. Stefano on the Via Latina in the early sixth century. His epitaph celebrates this association by dedicating the first seven lines to the memory of the saint, leaving the commemoration of the deceased to the remaining three lines.<sup>168</sup>

Up until the third century, Christian epitaphs were short and straightforward, usually recording a single name and occasionally a brief statement of religious feeling.<sup>169</sup> From the middle of the fourth century onwards, epitaphs of members of

<sup>168</sup> CIL VI, 32014 = ICUR n.s. VI, 15785 = EDR 114736: '[Martyris invicti Step]hani requiescis in aula / [re]dditur haec meritis iure corona tuis / [---] sudore parasti / [---] mors inica tulit / [---] cae]lestia munera carpis / [---] vita nefanda premit / [gratias agamus omnes] be[ato] martyri, qui nos suscepit. / [Hic requiescit in pace] Maurianus, vir spect[abilis], quem tellus ge[n]uit Italia n[on]atus Picens, qui vixit ann[is] LVIII, m[enses] XI, d[ies] VI / [Lampadi] et Orestes vv. cc. consulis dep[ositus] in p[ro]p[ri]a M[auri]/[anus] vir spe[ctabilis] sub die VII idus Septembris.' See PLRE II, Maurianus 3 for the date.

<sup>169</sup> Carletti (2000) 324–6; see also Carletti (2001).

the Roman elite became longer, giving more information about the religious conceptions as well as the social standing of the dead. As a result, the official career of aristocrats began to figure more prominently in these texts, which became more similar in form and function to traditional senatorial funerary inscriptions.<sup>170</sup> The wealthier members of the Christian community sought new forms of differentiating themselves, through the magnificence and location of their monuments, as well as by the genre in which their epitaphs were recorded, frequently making use of metric inscriptions.<sup>171</sup>

Funerary inscriptions played an important role in the visibility and memorialization of Roman aristocrats, and they can frequently be ascribed with some certainty to a concrete monumental context.<sup>172</sup> Although it would be impossible to make any quantitative analysis of this material, particularly because of its survival rate, it is clear that most of the inscriptions date from the final years of the fourth century or later—an impression that fits with our picture of the Christianization of the city and the development of Christian burial sites.<sup>173</sup> More importantly, epitaphs attest not only to the presence of aristocrats in Christian burial places, but also to the significance of these spaces for members of their families and households. In 389, a woman of Pannonian origin, Maximilla, was buried in a sarcophagus placed in the so-called Platonía. This was a large mausoleum, adjacent to the southern side of the apse of the Basilica Apostolorum on the Via Appia, which housed thirteen tombs before it received the relics of the Pannonian bishop Quirinus in the early fifth century, and was later known as the church of S. Quirinus (Fig. 4.3: A).<sup>174</sup> The inscription on the sarcophagus records that she was buried by her friend ‘Luceia, *clarissima femina*, daughter of Viventius, a man of most distinguished memory, ex praetorian and urban prefect’.<sup>175</sup> The mausoleum belonged to the family of Flavius Viventius, a native of Siscia in Pannonia who had a successful career during the reign of Valentinian I (also from the same region), reaching the urban prefecture in 365–7 and the praetorian prefecture of Gaul in 368–71.<sup>176</sup> Viventius was already dead when his daughter buried her friend in the family mausoleum.<sup>177</sup> Luceia was thus able to use that funerary complex as a way of reinforcing the family’s social connections.

<sup>170</sup> See Carletti (2008) 51–62; and Carletti (2000) 326–8.

<sup>171</sup> See the discussion in Grig (2017); also Carletti (2008) 89.

<sup>172</sup> See Niquet (2000) 33–40 for a useful discussion of this material; see especially Witschel (2012) 380–6 for a discussion of this issue.

<sup>173</sup> See Fiocchi Nicolai (2001) 79–93; see Nieddu (2003) 547–50 for a good discussion of the surviving epigraphy.

<sup>174</sup> See Nieddu (2006).

<sup>175</sup> *CIL* VI, 41342 = *ICUR* n.s. V, 13355 = *EDR* 093574: ‘...Luceia, c(larissima) f(emina), filia Viventi, c(larissimae) r(ecordationis) v(iri), ex praefecto / pr(a)etorio et urbis aeternae...’.

<sup>176</sup> *PLRE* I, Viventius; see also Bertolino (1994) 185–6 for the mausoleum.

<sup>177</sup> Viventius was mentioned as dead by Symmachus in 384: *Symm. Relat.* 30.3. The epitaph of Flavia Valeria, daughter of a Flavia Valentia, was found in the area of the basilica, but not in its original context: *ICUR* n.s. V, 13155.

The case of Viventius' family is not unique. The funerary monuments built inside and adjoining Christian basilicas were often shared by members of the same household, attesting to the importance of family links and specific religious spaces.<sup>178</sup> Members of a *domus* could also choose to celebrate their association with a powerful *paterfamilias* without actually occupying the same burial space. Petilius Processius was buried in the Basilica of S. Paul on the Via Ostiensis in 525. His epitaph records his standing as a man of *spectabilis* rank and a lawyer (*togatus*), besides mentioning his many personal qualities. It also records the fact that 'his beloved *domus* cries eternal tears', emphasizing the association between the members of the household and their deceased leader.<sup>179</sup> Dedicating a funerary monument was, in other words, an investment in the future of the family, and it could involve different parts of the city.

Funerary monuments were ideal contexts for the celebration of different forms of familial links. The verse inscription celebrating the suffect consul Insteius Pompeianus dedicated by his sister Paula, probably in the first half of the fourth century, is a good example of these possibilities.<sup>180</sup> Pompeianus died at a young age, while still at the beginning of his public career, before accomplishing anything worthy of note. The epitaph dealt with this shortage of eulogizing material by emphasizing his connection with the noble (and recently Christianized) *gens Insteia* ('ab Insteiis gens inclyta') while celebrating his promotion to a better life in heaven.<sup>181</sup> Accia Maria Tulliana was not the descendant of an ancient family, but her epitaph informed readers that she was the granddaughter of the already mentioned Marius Victorinus, one of the most illustrious cases of conversion from paganism in the fourth century—in itself a useful sign of familial distinction.<sup>182</sup> Epitaphs allowed aristocratic families to justify their claims for status. Just as Pompeianus was a descendant of a *gens inclyta*, Tulliana was the granddaughter of a famous intellectual and Christian convert, as well as married to a *vir clarissimus*.

Christian structures brought visibility, prestige, and a closer contact with holiness for the families who associated with them through funerary monuments. One of the most prominent *mausolea* built in the area of the Basilica Apostolorum was the splendid circular structure (with a diameter of 13.3 m) with a domed roof that stood by its entrance (Fig. 4.3: B). The building is datable to the first half of

<sup>178</sup> See, for example, De Rossi, *ICUR* I, 811 = *CIL* VI, 41401 = *ILCV* 246b = *EDR* 093624 (late fifth century); *CIL* VI, 32037 = *ICUR* n.s. I, 743 = *EDR* 114744 (late fifth century); De Rossi, *ICUR* I, 943 = *CIL* VI, 32049 = *ILCV* 168 = *EDR* 114760 (early sixth century).

<sup>179</sup> *CIL* VI, 32031 = *ICUR* n.s. II, 5043 = *EDR* 114742: 'perpetuis lacrimis plangit amata domus'. See also *PLRE* II, Processius.

<sup>180</sup> *CIL* VI, 32000 = *ICUR* n.s. I, 307 = *EDR* 114724 (seen in the Church of S. Dorotea, in Trastevere); see *PLRE* I, Pompeianus 6.

<sup>181</sup> See, on the Insteii, *RE* 9 (1916) coll. 1562–3, s.v. 'Insteius'. For the Christian Insteii, see *PLRE* I, Cilo, and Flavius 3. Not all members of the family were Christians, like the pagan urban prefect Insteius Tertullus, who performed sacrifices in Ostia: *PLRE* I, Tertullus 2.

<sup>182</sup> *CIL* VI, 31934 = 37113 = *ILCV* 104; Victorinus had also been honoured with a statue in the Forum of Trajan: *LSA* 2674.

the fourth century, based on its building technique and location, a contemporary with the construction of the church. It probably belonged to the upwardly mobile family of the Uranii, as suggested by the monumental inscription found in that spot.<sup>183</sup> Two members of the family are documented as occupying official positions in this period: Claudius Uranius, of equestrian rank, who was governor of Flaminia et Picenum in 325; and Flavius Uranius, governor of Samnium (when of equestrian rank) and later Isauria (with the rank of *clarissimus*) in the third quarter of the fourth century.<sup>184</sup> The building of a monumental tomb in a prominent location expressed the family's success, at a time when they were on the rise.

We see the same combination of political ambition and family celebration in the case of the epitaph set up for the aristocrat Eventius by his wife in the Basilica of S. Peter, in 407.<sup>185</sup> Eventius had enjoyed a successful career, starting as a lawyer; he was enrolled into the Senate by imperial favour, and later occupied the governorship of *Viennensis* in southern Gaul. His long epitaph (thirteen lines) tells us that he had come to Rome in the hope of a new political appointment, but he died before he was able to fulfil his ambition.<sup>186</sup> What made his monument particularly notable was its prominent place of dedication, the Basilica of S. Peter, a location that put this ambitious aristocrat in the religious centre of Rome, in association with the prince of the apostles. Death was not the end of his career, but (as it turned out) his most important promotion.

The large Christian basilicas that dominated parts of the Roman suburbs were public spaces, in the sense that they were open to all who wished to enter them. They were lavishly decorated, and their religious significance was enhanced by their association with the cult of martyrs. Their location, along the old consular roads that connected the centre of the city to its suburbs, made them easily accessible and ideal concluding points for funerary processions, especially as a few of these began to be equipped with porticoes, from the end of the fourth century onwards: this is the case of S. Lawrence on the Via Tiburtina and S. Peter's on the Vatican.<sup>187</sup> As such, these structures were ideal spaces for the celebration of aristocratic families and their ancestors, offering splendid and highly visible settings for their monuments. By using the same space, members of the Christian community affirmed their shared religious identity, whilst the size, decoration, and location of their tombs served as reminders of their social distinctions.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>183</sup> *ICUR* n.s. V, 13659a; see Machado (2011) 497–8. For a different interpretation, see Nieddu (2004) and (2008).

<sup>184</sup> *PLRE* I, Uranius 4 and 5. <sup>185</sup> *CIL* VI, 41377 = *AE* 1953, 200 = *EDR* 073935.

<sup>186</sup> *Il.* 4–6: 'inde iter Italiam magno cumulandus honore, ni luctu tristem linquens Eventius urbem neu vitae merito sanctis sociandus obisset'. See *PLRE* II, Eventius 1.

<sup>187</sup> See, respectively, for S. Lorenzo: Serra (1998); for S. Peter's: Liverani (2013) 29–30. *Coll. Avell.* 3.2 mentions the refurbishment of the road that led to S. Paul.

<sup>188</sup> See the discussion in Fiocchi Nicolai (2001) 131–2; see also Carletti (2008) 88; for the case of S. Paul on the Via Ostiensis, see Fiocchi Nicolai (2009).

### The 'Templum Probi'

The most spectacular venue for funerary commemoration in late antique Rome was the Vatican Basilica, a building that in spite of its imperial origins seems to have been used by members of important aristocratic families, like the Gallic senator Eventius, mentioned above (Fig. 4.4).<sup>189</sup> The basilica itself had been built on top of an earlier cemetery in which the apostle Peter himself was believed to have been buried after his martyrdom in 64, and his presumed tomb was incorporated into the Constantinian building.<sup>190</sup> This was the final destination of the funerary procession of the prefect of 359, Iunius Bassus, where his sarcophagus was placed in the family tomb—a space that was still in use until at least the middle of the fifth century.<sup>191</sup> The funerary monument of the Bassi was located inside the basilica, in front of the altar of the crypt, and it is a striking example of *depositio ad martyres*, possibly carried out before the basilica had been completed.<sup>192</sup>

Beyond the basilica itself, the main area used for aristocratic burials seems to have been immediately behind the building. At the time of the great destructions carried out by pope Nicholas V (1452), Maffeo Vegio reported seeing a number of grand tombs, and part of the cemetery was still visible in the early sixteenth century, when large sarcophagi were found.<sup>193</sup> It is not clear how old this cemetery was, since Vegio mentions the presence of pagan tombs.<sup>194</sup> The area available for burials was extended during the pontificate of Damasus (366–84), when works were carried out to drain the hill to protect the tombs from flooding.<sup>195</sup> It was probably the Damasan works that made it possible for the construction of the grandest aristocratic mausoleum connected to S. Peter's, the monument of Petronius Probus and his family.

Vegio's description is our main source of information about this tomb.<sup>196</sup> The *templum Probi* (as he called it) was grand and noble, decorated with many marble columns and inscriptions. At the time of Vegio, the mausoleum could not be entered from any side, and it was probably thanks to demolition works that the many treasures reported by a pilgrim in the middle of the fifteenth century were found.<sup>197</sup> Further information can be gathered from the plan drawn by

<sup>189</sup> What follows expands on Machado (2011).

<sup>190</sup> See Ward-Perkins and Toynbee (1956) 200–3; also Krautheimer (1980) 26–8. On the foundation of the basilica, see now Liverani (2015).

<sup>191</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 232. <sup>192</sup> Paolucci (2008) 249.

<sup>193</sup> M. Vegio, *De rebus antiquis memorabilibus basilicae S. Petri Romae*, in Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice III*, 385 (also in De Rossi, *ICUR II*, 349). See also Liverani (1999B) 148 and Paolucci (2008) 248.

<sup>194</sup> A number of necropoleis occupied this part of the city: see Liverani and Spinola (2006).

<sup>195</sup> As recorded in *Epigrammata Damasiana*, n. 3: 'Cingebant latices monte[m teneroq(ue) meatu] / corpora multorum cineres [adq(ue) ossa rigabant]...'; see discussion of this inscription in Brandt (2013) 83–5.

<sup>196</sup> See M. Vegio, *De rebus antiquis*, 384–5 (De Rossi, *ICUR II*, 347–9). Also Lanciani (1989) 64. Useful discussions can be found in Paolucci (2008) 245–8 and esp. Bartolozzi Casti (2011) 437–50.

<sup>197</sup> Cited by Liverani (1999B) 147–8.

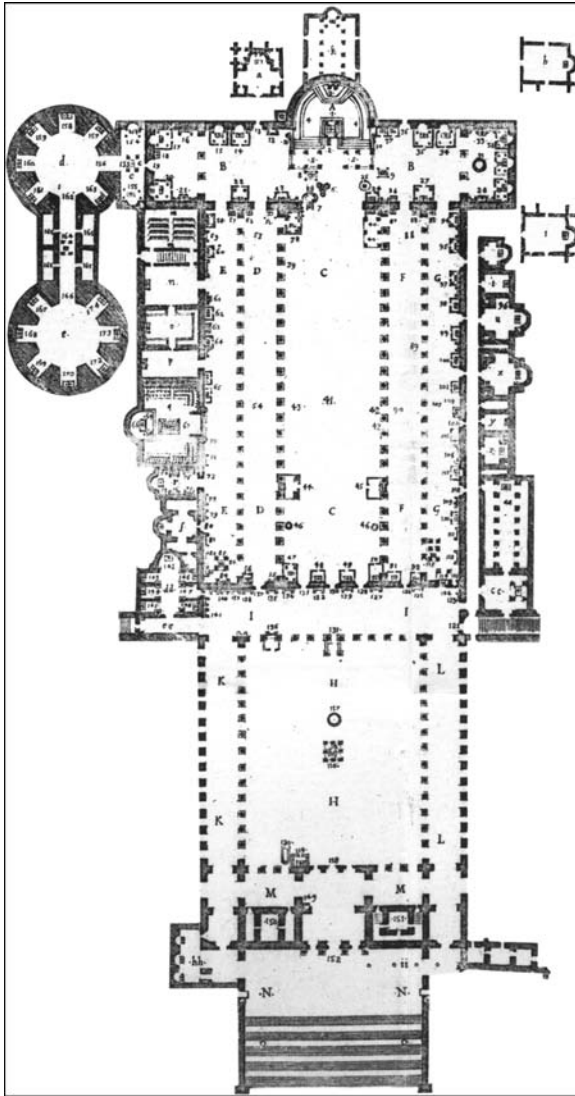


Fig. 4.4. The Basilica of S. Peter.

Adapted by Mary Woodcock Kroble from T. Alfarano, *De Basilicae Vaticanae antiquissima et nova structura*, ed. M. Cerratti, Rome 1914, Tav. 1.

Tiberio Alfarano in the second half of the sixteenth century. The tomb of the Probi is here shown as a basilica (12 x 18 m) with an apse and three naves separated by pillars.<sup>198</sup> The location of the tomb was also striking, having been built (partially or

<sup>198</sup> For the architecture of the tomb, see the description in Alfarano (1914). Particularly useful are Krautheimer (1964) 171–5, and Liverani (1999B) 147–8 (who expresses doubts over Alfarano's plans).

completely) as an underground complex, back to back with the apse of the Vatican Basilica. In other words, it was right next to the *martyrium* of Peter himself.

The location and splendour of the Anician mausoleum would have been enough to single it out as one of the most important structures in the Vatican complex. But it was the name and standing of Petronius Probus and his family that made it such a powerful presence. The long inscription copied by Vegio celebrates Probus, distinguished by his wealth, family, and titles, brought closer to Christ after his death:

... Rich in wealth, of noble family, exalted in office and distinguished in your consulship, worthy of your consular grandfather, twice governing the people in your twofold prefecture—these worldly trappings, these noble titles, you rose above in age through the gift granted you by Christ. This is your true office, this your nobility. Previously you rejoiced in the honour of the royal table, in the emperor's ear and the friendship of royalty. Now, closer to Christ after attaining the abode of the saints, you enjoy a new light. Christ is present as your light . . .<sup>199</sup>

As Matthews observed, '...the epitaph almost persuades us that Probus had simply received yet another promotion in his political career'.<sup>200</sup> The sarcophagus of Probus and his wife, showing Christ and the apostles on one side and a man and a woman (presumably the same couple) on the other, was found here. Another large sarcophagus, depicting Christ transmitting his Law to Peter in front of city gates, is also reported as coming from this mausoleum.<sup>201</sup> Writing in the sixteenth century, Antonio Bosio attributed other sarcophagi with similar motifs to this tomb, a possibility that would fit the description of Vegio.<sup>202</sup> This was a spectacular family tomb, a fitting memorial to one of the most influential men in the late fourth century and his descendants.

The strong familial links between members of the Anician family were also celebrated through the dedication of five statues to Probus and his wife by their children: Anicius Probinus, Anicius Probus, and Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius (with his wife Anicia Iuliana).<sup>203</sup> The statues and their bases have long since disappeared, and their provenance remains unknown. The dedicatory inscriptions record the personal virtues and political accomplishments of the parents, while also commemorating the political successes of the children. The statues were dedicated in 395, when Probinus and Olybrius were appointed joint

<sup>199</sup> CIL VI, 1756b = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4219, ll. 5–14 (transl. in Croke and Harries (1982) 117). On Probus and his career, see below, pp. 222–3.

<sup>200</sup> Matthews (1990) 195; this is also emphasized in Trout (2001) 165.

<sup>201</sup> See Dresken-Weiland (2003) 377–8. The sarcophagi of Probus and of the Anicii are now in the *Grotte Vaticane* and in the Louvre, respectively.

<sup>202</sup> See Bosio (1632) 55.

<sup>203</sup> CIL VI, 1752–6 = *LSA* 1459–63.



consuls, in spite of their young age.<sup>204</sup> This initiative was repeated a decade later, when Anicius Probus was made consul, and a few verses were added to one of the statue bases.<sup>205</sup> These monuments were dedicated, therefore, after the death of Probus, which probably took place in 388 when he was exiled in Thessalonica. Their inscribed bases were first recorded as being in the gardens of the Palazzo Cesi, right by S. Peter's. The first member of the Cesi family to expand its collection of antiquities was cardinal Paolo Emilio, born in 1481, when works for the construction of the basilica were already under way.<sup>206</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that the bases, with the statues they originally supported, were originally dedicated in the mausoleum of Probus, a possibility that is supported by their posthumous character.<sup>207</sup> If this is correct, the mausoleum of the Anicii would have been a splendid monument, full of political and religious resonances.

It was not uncommon for aristocrats to receive posthumous dedications of statues, in private and public places. Iunius Bassus was honoured with a statue in his family's villa at Falerii Novi (modern province of Viterbo).<sup>208</sup> In Rome, a statue was dedicated to Nicomachus Flavianus in the Forum of Trajan decades after his death.<sup>209</sup> There are also earlier examples to which we can compare the *templum Probi* in Rome itself: tombs richly decorated with marble columns and inscriptions, populated by the remains and the likenesses of members of a prestigious family. The tomb of Marcus Artorius Geminus, in Trastevere, is one such example; the tomb of Priscilla, on the Via Appia, described by Statius in his *Silvae*, is another.<sup>210</sup>

The location of the statues dedicated by the children of Probus in the family tomb, if correct, would also provide us with a date and a context for the inauguration of such a splendid dynastic monument: the consulship of the brothers Probinus and Olybrius in 395. The choice of the sons of Probus as consuls must be seen in the context of the political turmoil in the West, following the victory of Theodosius over Eugenius. Roman aristocrats were deeply involved in this usurpation, and the court had to struggle to legitimize the new regime of the young Honorius.<sup>211</sup> When composing the panegyric read in honour of the two young consuls, Claudian made copious references to their deceased father, and the political overtones of the epitaph, mentioned earlier, also makes more sense in this context. The descendants of Petronius Probus would remain loyal supporters of both the imperial court and of orthodoxy, for the decades to come.

Throughout late antiquity, the Basilica of S. Peter remained essentially associated with the Church of Rome and the imperial court. In 424, the emperor

<sup>204</sup> *PLRE* I, Probinus 2 and Olybrius 1.

<sup>205</sup> *CIL* VI, 1754 = *LSA* 1461, dedicated to Proba. For the date of the consulship, see *PLRE* II, Probus 11.

<sup>206</sup> See Lanciani (1992) 111–26, for the Museo Cesi.

<sup>207</sup> A possibility already suggested by Bosio (1632) 55.

<sup>208</sup> *AE* 1964, 203 = *LSA* 1628 (from 364). <sup>209</sup> *CIL* VI, 1783 = *LSA* 1247 (from 431).

<sup>210</sup> See Silvestrini (1987) 73–9. Also Stat., *Silv.* 5.1.221–36. For a general discussion, see Wrede (1978).

<sup>211</sup> See Cameron (1970) 31–2.

Honorius was buried in the even grander mausoleum that was built next to its transept, confirming the centrality of this area for imperial self-presentation in the city.<sup>212</sup> The basilica would gain renewed prominence in episcopal initiatives over the course of the fifth century, initially through liturgical developments and finally as the preferred burial space of bishops.<sup>213</sup> Before these developments took place, however, the mausoleum of Petronius Probus and his family served as a striking example of the close association between aristocratic power, public standing, and urban space. Here, the funerary commemoration of the most powerful member of the Roman aristocracy was joined up with the celebration of his sons' joint consulship, connecting the family *domus*, the Roman Forum, and the Vatican. The family was thus able to exploit the development of Rome's religious topography to display its unique achievements and standing in a way that was both traditional and innovative. Although exceptional, the *templum Probi* illustrates the extent to which members of the Roman aristocracy were able to appropriate even the most important centre of Christian Rome for the glorification of a family.

## Conclusion

Festivals and ceremonies played a crucial role in ancient city life. In Rome as in countless other cities around the Mediterranean, the spaces of the city were venues for public and personal celebrations all through the year. The festive occasions that gave meaning and rhythm to social and political life had a profound impact on the daily experiences of the *populus Romanus*, as well as on the monumental appearance of the *Urbs*. As this chapter has shown, from the beginning of the fourth century onwards, members of the Roman aristocracy played an increasing role in these occasions. Aristocrats of the lowest and highest rank became directly involved in celebrations of imperial power, be it taking part in imperial visits or inaugurating imperial monuments and statues. Their political success was celebrated with spectacular games and processions, which brought together different sectors of the Roman society, occupying spaces like the Forum, the Circus, and the Colosseum. New officials were appointed every year, but the glory of a promotion was not always ephemeral. The most successful senators were honoured with statues that celebrated their personal standing as well as their participation in the *ordo*, in domestic spaces as well as in the Forum of Trajan. As the evolution in the number of statues dedicated suggest, aristocrats played a growing life in the city's festive life, even when emperors returned to the old capital in the fifth century.

Not only official occasions mattered. In a city as deeply marked by hierarchies and honour, where families claimed a long and distinguished ancestry as a form of

<sup>212</sup> See Johnson (2009) 167–74; also McEvoy (2013).

<sup>213</sup> The episcopate of Leo the Great was a key moment in this evolution: see Salzman (2013); for burials, see Picard (1993) 236.

legitimizing their social dominance, social hierarchies were displayed and celebrated on every public appearance of aristocratic men and women. This was made clearer on personal commemorations like baptisms and—especially—funerals. Although biased towards the most spectacular Christian burials, the evidence available for late antique Rome reveals important trends in funerary practices. Roman aristocrats used their monumental tombs and inscriptions as a way of appropriating and helping to shape the city's nascent Christian funerary topography. They sought association with the saints, and did it in conspicuous spaces that left a clear mark on the city's main burial grounds. Not even S. Peter's, one of the most prestigious spaces in the new religion, escaped this process.

The aristocratic involvement in late antique Rome's festive life was not free from reactions, however. These were very public moments in the life of the city, and political and religious adversaries used them to express their opposition—and sometimes distaste—towards their opponents, as Jerome and the author of the *Carmen contra paganos* did against Praetextatus, in 384. Emperors and the court tried to curb excesses in personal and official celebrations, seeking to limit expenditure and to regulate forms of personal celebration. As the Church became a central part in the life of the city, bishops also played a defining role in these ceremonies. At the beginning of the episcopate of Sixtus III (432–40), an aristocrat named Bassus (probably Flavius Anicius Auchenius Bassus) brought an accusation against the bishop that divided the Church and the (by then mostly Christian) aristocracy.<sup>214</sup> According to the *Liber pontificalis*, the controversy was resolved in a council presided over by the emperor Valentinian III; Sixtus was cleared of all charges, whereas Bassus lost his properties. Bassus died within three months, his corpse was wrapped with linen and spices, and he was buried in his ancestor's tomb in S. Peter's—the same place where the prefect Iunius Bassus had been buried in 359. Although the reliability of this story is debatable, it indicates not only the importance of family tombs in the most important burial ground in late antique Rome, but also the growing power of the bishop in turning a funeral into an occasion for showing his mercy whilst celebrating his victory over a powerful aristocrat. This process would not be complete before the sixth century, however. Before that, late antique Rome's festive life was to a great extent dominated by the city's elite, turning different types of occasions into a celebration of their power. That they were able to do it shows the reach of their ambitions and of the means at their disposal.

<sup>214</sup> These events are narrated in *Lib. pont.* I, 232, and also in the *Gesta de Xysti purgatione*. See, for Bassus, *PLRE* II, Bassus 8. For the events, and the problems raised by the evidence, Sessa (2007) 91–9.

## The Redefinition of Religious Life

At some point during his brief pontificate (492–6), pope Gelasius wrote a letter to an official named Andromachus ‘and other Romans’, reprimanding them for promoting the religious festival of the Lupercalia.<sup>1</sup> Andromachus was the head of the Palatine offices (*magister officiorum*) and assessor (*consiliarius*) who served the Ostrogothic king Odoacer in 489, and possibly *praefectus urbi* when the letter was written.<sup>2</sup> The Lupercalia was an old ceremony, according to some sources as old as the city, which took place on 15 February. It traditionally consisted of a sacrifice and a banquet, followed by a race around the Palatine Hill (possibly including the Forum), in which participants hit onlookers with strips of hide.<sup>3</sup> It is not known whether sacrifices were still being performed at such a late date, but Gelasius makes it clear that the ceremony still attracted great public attention. The greatest difference from the past, according to the bishop, was that the *luperci* were now professional actors, sponsored by patrons like Andromachus and his friends.<sup>4</sup> The ceremony, as described in the letter, also included the chanting of jokes and the singing of obscene songs, possibly attacking members of the clergy and the bishop himself.<sup>5</sup> Although the *lupercaliorum patroni* played down the religious meaning of the celebration, Gelasius insisted on its pagan character, excommunicating his opponents for sponsoring it:

And so you too, after the blasphemies that you poured forth publicly and officially, must abstain by all means from the sacred body. You cannot take part on the Lord’s table and the table of demons, nor can you drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the demons; you cannot be the temple of God and the temple of the devil; light and darkness cannot come together in you.<sup>6</sup>

Gelasius was bishop at a time of dramatic religious transformations that encompassed the whole Mediterranean. The rise of Christianity was part of a comprehensive

<sup>1</sup> The letter was preserved as *Ep.* 100 of the *Collectio Avellana*, with the title ‘Eiusdem Papae Gelasii adversum Andromachum et ceteros romanos qui Lupercalia secundum morem pristinum colenda constituunt’. See McLynn (2008) and, more recently, Neil and Allen (2014), with a translation on pp. 209–21.

<sup>2</sup> See *PLRE* II, Andromachus 2. For his identification as prefect see McLynn (2008) 171.

<sup>3</sup> Although mentioned in many sources, the ceremony is described in different ways. See North (2008) for a discussion of the available evidence.

<sup>4</sup> Gelas., *Adv. Androm.* 16. <sup>5</sup> McLynn (2008) 171.

<sup>6</sup> Gelas., *Adv. Androm.* 9 (transl. Neil and Allen).

process that involved much more than the adoption of a new cult. As Peter Brown showed, the very notion of sacred and its place in human society was redefined, as new forms of religious authority and new conceptions of personal salvation were developed.<sup>7</sup> In Rome, the period that stretches from approximately 270 to 535 was marked by a series of transformations that turned the old pagan capital into the centre of western Christianity.<sup>8</sup> The conversion of ever-larger segments of the population to the new religion was accompanied by the institutional development of the Church and the consolidation of episcopal authority. The topography of the city was also Christianized, with the creation of a network of large basilicas, smaller parish churches (*tituli*), cemeteries, and spaces for the assistance of people in need (Map 2).<sup>9</sup>

In the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, different clerical and laic groups claimed to be the true bearers of orthodoxy, developing their own traditions and sometimes even establishing their own structures of power, with their own bishops.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as the example of the Lupercalia reminds us, pagan religious traditions and practices continued to be observed until a very late date. Few scholars nowadays would see the interactions between Christians and pagans in the fourth and fifth centuries exclusively (or even predominantly) as a religious conflict, but it is impossible to deny that pagan traditions could still play an important part in a Christian context.<sup>11</sup> These were not just pagan survivals, or mere secular celebrations. Gelasius observed that Romans still celebrated the cult of the gods Februarius and of Castor and Pollux in the late fifth century, indicating that his contemporaries did not see their Christian identity at risk for engaging in such practices.<sup>12</sup> This same ambiguity can be seen in regard to the city's traditional religious spaces. Late antique Romans still appreciated the importance and beauty of the temples and statues dedicated to the gods of old.<sup>13</sup> From the time of Constantine onwards, however, emperors issued a series of laws banning the performance of rituals connected to them, forbidding the worship of religious images and confiscating the properties of pagan temples. Imperial legislation (and funding) rarely amounted to a coherent policy, but these issues received increasing attention from the court.<sup>14</sup> Although the evidence for the abandonment of temples is often problematic, it is well documented for the middle of the fifth century in the cases of the Temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine, the Sanctuary of Anna

<sup>7</sup> Brown (1978); see also Stroumsa (2009) and, for a Roman perspective, Beard, North, and Price (1998) 364–88.

<sup>8</sup> As discussed in the Introduction, pp. 7–8, with bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> See Spera (2013) for an overview; also Reekmans (1989).

<sup>10</sup> See Pietri (1976) 407–61; see also Salzman (2010) and Sessa (2012).

<sup>11</sup> For the vitality of late Roman paganism, see Lizzi Testa (2010).

<sup>12</sup> See *Adv. Androm.* 11 and 18.

<sup>13</sup> See, on the importance attached to temples and statues, Machado (2009).

<sup>14</sup> See, among others, Curran (1996); also Delmaire (2004). These should be read with Lizzi Testa (2011).

Perenna to the north of the city, and the Basilica Hilariana, on the Caelian Hill, as indicated by stratigraphic analysis and the discarded pottery.<sup>15</sup> Whether through their religious legislation, their administrative policies, or simply by their personal example, emperors had a direct impact on Rome's religious life.

The consolidation of Christianity and the decline of paganism represented a major social and cultural redefinition of the city of Rome and of its secular elite. The involvement of Roman senators in this process is a long-standing subject of scholarly attention, having attracted renewed scrutiny in recent years. The work of Alan Cameron, especially *The Last Pagans of Rome*, did much to foster this recent reevaluation: whereas previous scholars saw pagan senators as pious and committed fighters in the defence of their beliefs, Cameron showed them as consumers of an antiquarian culture who were mostly detached from the religious developments of the age.<sup>16</sup> By playing down the religious dimension of senatorial culture, however, Cameron overlooked the role played by members of the elite in the history of the city. As scholars like Lellia Cracco Ruggini and Rita Lizzi Testa showed, pagan aristocrats were responsible for more than just the survival of traditional institutions and rituals: late Roman paganism experienced great vitality in the fourth century, and continued to be relevant both politically and culturally in later periods—in large part, due to the engagement of the city's ruling class.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, for the case of Christianity, scholars have illuminated the role played by aristocrats as patrons of buildings, cults, and religious groups; as Kim Bowes argued, the houses of powerful Romans were the *locus* of intense religious activity, frequently independent from episcopal control.<sup>18</sup> Crucially, aristocrats—whether pagans or Christian—were deeply engaged in all aspects of the religious life of the city in a defining way; not just as worshippers and followers, but as religious leaders in their own right, as I will argue. The religious transformation of late antique Rome offered many opportunities for members of the elite to exercise and expand their influence and standing in the late antique city.

The nature and extent of senatorial involvement in religious affairs changed over time. For most of the fourth century, aristocrats remained predominantly associated with the traditional cults and celebrations; conversion was a slow process that only gained momentum after the 350s.<sup>19</sup> During this period, the Church remained one among a group of powerful players in Rome: influential pagans, dissenting Christian groups, and the different factions that competed to

<sup>15</sup> Temple of Magna Mater: C. Panella, in Carignani et al. (1986) 27–8; Anna Perenna: Piranomonte (2002) 20; Basilica Hilariana: P. Palazzo, in Palazzo and Pavolini (2013) 89–92.

<sup>16</sup> See Cameron (1977), (1999A), and, for the book, (2011). Note that Cameron is more interested in the cultural aspects of paganism, rather than in its religious dimension. For useful (and very different) reviews, see Paschoud (2012) and Cooper (2014).

<sup>17</sup> Cracco Ruggini (1979) remains a fundamental reference; Lizzi Testa (2007), (2009) and (2010). Matthews (1973) also remains extremely influential.

<sup>18</sup> Bowes (2008). For patronage, see the essays collected in Cooper and Hillner (2007).

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in the introduction. See Brown (1961) and Salzman (2002).

assert their dominance over the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Roman aristocrats of different religious leanings were thus able to exert great influence in the city's religious life. This situation began to change in the first decades of the fifth century, as the pace of Christianization was increased and bishops started to play a more assertive role in the *Urbs*—the episcopate of Leo (440–61) marking a clear turning point.<sup>20</sup> Roman aristocrats would continue to play a crucial role in these affairs, sponsoring cults and promoting traditions like the Lupercalia, but bishops commanded enough authority (spiritual and secular) and material resources to impose their dominance over an ever larger part of city life.<sup>21</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the involvement of the Roman aristocracy in this process of religious transformation of the city and of its religious spaces. In order to do this, it will address the following issues: what role did aristocrats play in late antique Rome's religious life? In what ways did aristocrats use religious festivities and celebrations to advertise their social power and personal standing? And finally, to what extent were they involved in the transformation of the *Urbs*'s religious topography? Rather than focusing on the Christianization of the city, or the fate of pagan cults, our focus will be on the senatorial aristocracy as a whole, and the ways in which this group reacted to and influenced these processes.

### Aristocrats and Religious Life

In 384, the pagan prefect Quintus Aurelius Symmachus addressed an official letter to the court in Milan requesting the return of the altar of the goddess Victory to the Senate house in Rome. As we saw in Chapter 3, the altar and the statue that accompanied it were an important element in the identity of the Curia as a senatorial space.<sup>22</sup> The altar was used by senators for the celebration of their vows of allegiance to the ruling emperor before every senatorial meeting, and it had been recently removed by the emperor Gratian. Symmachus' letter was not limited to the fate of the altar, arguing also for the restoration of the fiscal privileges of the Vestal virgins, and including a passionate plea for religious toleration. But the altar was its main stated subject, and Symmachus' third *Relatio* is a good example of the degree to which aristocrats could be involved in the process of redefining the city's religious life during this period. Symmachus was not just an urban prefect at the time. He was also a *pontifex maior*, a member of the college that oversaw the observance of sacral law in the city. As such, he was able to emphasize the altar's numinous character, which in his opinion could be appreciated independently of one's pagan or Christian affiliation ('*illa ara*

<sup>20</sup> As the work of Salzman has persuasively shown: (2010), (2013), and (2014).

<sup>21</sup> A process analysed in Sessa (2012).

<sup>22</sup> P. 109, with bibliography.

*convenit singulorum*').<sup>23</sup> Writing in opposition to the prefect's pleas, Ambrose, bishop of Milan, observed that Christian senators would be obliged to take part in pagan rites if the altar was restored to the Curia, admitting that the religious argument was relevant.<sup>24</sup> Revealingly, Ambrose never questioned the right of a pagan senator and imperial official to discuss such religious issues.

The Roman prefect was not doing anything extraordinary in advocating for the importance and restoration of the altar. He was doing what was expected of a man of his social and political standing. Since the origins of the city, Roman aristocrats had played a decisive role in its religious life.<sup>25</sup> Even after the reign of Augustus, when emperors controlled the activities and composition of the priestly colleges by occupying the office of *pontifex maximus*, senators still made up the majority of the city's main sacerdotal colleges, remaining directly involved in sacred matters.<sup>26</sup> Roman religion was not reserved for specialists, and aristocrats also played an important part as magistrates, public figures, and leaders of their households. In a sense, the spaces where imperial and city officials performed their duties, as well as the houses in which their families lived, could legitimately be considered part of Rome's religious topography.<sup>27</sup> Members of the Roman elite continued to play an important part in the religious life and institutions of the city throughout late antiquity, and it is necessary to consider how this part changed at a time of great religious transformations.

### Pagan priesthoods

Being a priest was one of the most conspicuous forms of influencing religious life available to senators. There were different types of priesthood in Rome, some associated with specific communities of initiates, such as Mithraism and Christianity itself; others connected to cults with a strong presence in Rome's public life, such as the worship of Isis and Magna Mater. The most visible priest-hoods were those officially identified with the history and functioning of the *Res Publica*. These were civic functions, frequently occupied by aristocrats and members of the Roman elite, grouped in colleges and organized hierarchically under the authority of the emperor as *pontifex maximus*. Official priesthoods were dedicated to a variety of cults, dealing with different aspects of religious life,

<sup>23</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 3.5: the altar is defined as *praesentia numinis*; see *Relat.* 3.3–4, for the political argument.

<sup>24</sup> Amb., *Ep.* 72.9. See also Brown (2012) 103–9 for a recent discussion of these issues.

<sup>25</sup> Much of what follows is indebted to the work of Scheid (2005) and (2016). For the imperial period, see now also Várhelyi (2010).

<sup>26</sup> See the information gathered in Rüpke (2005); see also Scheid (2003) 119–246. For the impact of emperors, see Beard, North, and Price (1998) 167–210.

<sup>27</sup> See Scheid (2005) and (2007). For houses, see Bodel (2008B); see Watts (2015) 18–28 for the religious infrastructure of the early fourth century.



representing an important source of prestige for senators.<sup>28</sup> In the year Symmachus addressed his report on the altar of Victory to the court, for example, members of the city elite are attested as members of the pontifical college, as priests of the Sun, as members of the board of fifteen men for sacred affairs (*XVviri sacris faciundis*), as officials in charge of sacred feasts (*epulones*), and as augurs.<sup>29</sup> Symmachus' personal correspondence illustrates the variety of areas in which these officials were involved in the late fourth century, overseeing the activities and behaviour of Vestal virgins, assisting in the expiation of prodigies, presiding over festivals, and generally looking after the goodwill of the gods.<sup>30</sup>

Rome's official system of priestly colleges experienced profound changes from the last decades of the third century onwards, until its disappearance probably in the early fifth century. According to his biography in the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelian reorganized the priesthoods of the city in the 270s.<sup>31</sup> The same emperor built the Temple of the Sun and invigorated the priesthood dedicated to it.<sup>32</sup> The Aurelianic priesthood of *deus Sol* quickly gained prominence in the senatorial *cursus honorum*, probably at the same time that members of the old college of pontiffs began to style themselves *pontifices maiores* (and later *pontifices Vestae*), indicating that the relationship between Rome's most prestigious priesthoods was changing.<sup>33</sup> Another important innovation was the creation of a new priesthood in the early fourth century, associated with the cult of the family of Constantine: the only known case from Rome is Lucius Aradius Valerius Proculus, an aristocrat of great success during the Constantinian regime.<sup>34</sup> Alan Cameron suggested that this priesthood was an honorific title in Rome, associated with the cult of the *gens Flavia* in Hispellum, Umbria.<sup>35</sup> However, Aurelius Victor tells us that Constantine instituted a priesthood dedicated to the cult of his family in Africa as well, indicating that this was part of a wider policy, and we should not dismiss its religious dimension too quickly.<sup>36</sup>

The number of active priesthoods documented remained stable for most of the fourth century, until it declined dramatically in the 390s: the only official priests still in office at the end of the century were Symmachus and Publilius Caeionius

<sup>28</sup> Van Haepelen (2002), is the basic starting point. Rüpke (2005) is an essential reference work. For a critical view of late antique priesthoods, Cameron (2011) 132–72.

<sup>29</sup> Rüpke (2005) 536.

<sup>30</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 2.36 (on Vestals), 1.49 (prodigies), 2.53 and 2.59 (festivals), and 1.46 (goodwill of the gods).

<sup>31</sup> *SHA, Aur.* 35.3: 'sacerdotia composuit'.

<sup>32</sup> *SHA, Aur.* 35.3: 'templum Solis fundavit et pontifices roboravit'.

<sup>33</sup> See Christol (1986) 65. For *pontifices maiores*, see e.g. *AE* 1895, 119 = *LSA* 1674 and *AE* 1964, 223 = *LSA* 2579.

<sup>34</sup> See *PLRE* I, Proculus 11 for his career and pontificate. He was praised by Constantine in a letter to the Senate: *CIL* VI, 40716 = *LSA* 2685.

<sup>35</sup> Cameron (2011) 141.

<sup>36</sup> *Aur. Victor, Caes.* 40.28.

Caecina Albinus, both members of the pontifical college.<sup>37</sup> The interpretation of this decline remains open to debate, as scholars disagree over how important the last priests were, and especially over the influence of Christianity in the process.<sup>38</sup> The disappearance of official priests seems to be at least in part related to the role played by emperors in the life of Rome's priestly colleges. As *pontifices maximi*, emperors were involved in the appointment of new members for the different colleges, possibly in conjunction with the colleges themselves.<sup>39</sup> This became an issue when emperors converted to Christianity and moved away from Rome, during the fourth century. Symmachus mentioned in his report about the altar of Victory that Constantius II had 'filled the priesthoods with noble men' during his visit to Rome in 357.<sup>40</sup> His remark confirms the importance of emperors for the survival of these institutions, while also suggesting that this had not been done for a while. As Christian circles became more influential in the court in the late fourth century, emperors detached themselves from their traditional pagan associations—a movement indicated by the adoption of the title of *pontifex inclitus*, as observed by Alan Cameron.<sup>41</sup> Just as imperial activism had increased the number of priesthoods and reorganized the sacerdotal colleges in the late third century, imperial distancing from the old religion contributed to the end of new appointments. It is likely that the progress of Christianization among the upper classes reduced the pool of candidates from which priests could be recruited, especially in later periods. Even such an apparently obvious explanation should be treated with care, however: the existence of *flamines* associated with the imperial cult in Africa well into the fifth century is an important reminder of the fact that powerful Christians were not necessarily against all priesthoods.<sup>42</sup>

The late antique evolution of the traditional public priesthoods also had an impact in the definition of the city-spaces. This is illustrated by the case of the Arval Brethren, the *Fratres Arvales*, a college that was closely associated with the imperial cult and that consistently co-opted senators as members.<sup>43</sup> The *Arvales* met in different parts of the city, but especially in the outskirts of Rome, in the sacred grove of Dea Dia, approximately five miles to the south-west of the city. There they performed sacrifices for the goddess and for the *genius* of the reigning emperor, in a complex that included a Temple of Dea Dia, a *Caesareum* used for

<sup>37</sup> See, respectively, *PLRE* I, Symmachus 4, and Albinus 8. Rüpke (2005) 543 also suggests Flavius Macrobius Longinianus and Marcus Philonius Philomusus Eugenianus, but the evidence presented is not convincing: see *PLRE* II, Longinianus and *CIL* VI, 736 = *EDR* 126831, respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Haack (2003) 177–221 puts too much emphasis on Christianity; Lizzi Testa (2009) stresses the continuities. Cameron (2011) 133 sees priesthoods as political rather than religious offices already for the early empire.

<sup>39</sup> As observed for example by Cameron (2007) 356–7. Rüpke (2005) 1602–3 denies this imperial role, putting emphasis on the colleges.

<sup>40</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 3.7: 'replevit nobilibus sacerdotia'.

<sup>41</sup> Cameron (2007) 363; also (2011) 51–6.

<sup>42</sup> Chastagnol and Duval (1972); Chastagnol (1988B).

<sup>43</sup> The most complete study is Scheid (1990), esp. pp. 183–5 for the composition of the college.

imperial worship, a circus, and a bathing complex.<sup>44</sup> The proceedings of the meetings, including the names of attendants, were recorded in a series of inscriptions datable to the period between 20 BC and AD 241.<sup>45</sup> There is no information about meetings of the college after this date, until 304: a fragmentary inscription carved on a reused marble slab records a meeting under the supervision of Annius Rufus, the last of the *Arvales* attested.<sup>46</sup> The *Lucus* of the *Arvales* seems to have been in the process of abandonment by the middle of the fourth century, when parts of the bathing complex lost its function.<sup>47</sup> There is no information about the fate of other structures in the complex, and whether they followed the same pattern as the *balneum*, but the rapid expansion of the catacombs of S. Generosa in that same area, especially during the episcopate of Damasus (366–84), suggests that the complex of the *Arvales* had lost its original function by that date.<sup>48</sup> The decline of official priesthoods was associated with a change in the use and definition of urban space, at the same time that it affected a traditional type of association between aristocrats and the sacred.

### Magistrates and imperial officials

Ancient religious life was traditionally marked by the close identification of civic and religious authority. In Rome, consuls, prefects, praetors, and the Senate exercised real power in matters related to the sacred, presiding over festivals, ceremonies, and rituals.<sup>49</sup> This is well illustrated by a series of dedications made by urban praetors in the Forum Boarium, a busy part of the city crowded with monuments and utilitarian structures. Besides its associations with the cattle market after which it was named, it was connected to the port of Rome, and it was an important area for the activity of money changers and other traders.<sup>50</sup> It was an important area for the activities of praetors, officials with judicial authority over a wide range of civil and commercial issues in the *Urbs*. The Forum also contained a number of temples and structures dedicated to Hercules: the Temple of Hercules Pompeianus, the Temple of Hercules Victor (possibly the round temple that still stands in the area), and the temple of Hercules *in Foro Boario*. The most important structure was the Ara Maxima, an altar where sacrifices celebrating Hercules Invictus were performed by praetors every year on 12 August, probably to be identified as the large platform of tufa blocks on top

<sup>44</sup> Scheid (1990) 103–66: most of our knowledge about the complex is based on epigraphic evidence.

<sup>45</sup> These are collected in Scheid (1998).

<sup>46</sup> See Scheid (1998) n. 116; also Scheid (1994).

<sup>47</sup> Indicated by the layer of abandonment and coin finds in its furnace. The complex was finally abandoned in the mid-fifth century. See Broise and Scheid (1987) 149–51.

<sup>48</sup> Discussed by Scheid (2011).

<sup>49</sup> Scheid (2013) 16.

<sup>50</sup> See, on this area, Coarelli (1988). See more recently, for the archaeology, Fucsiello (2001). See also *CIL* VI, 1035 = *EDR* 103504 for the presence of the *argentari(i) et negotiantes boari(i)*.

of which the medieval church of S. Maria in Cosmedin was built.<sup>51</sup> According to an ancient tradition, Hercules visited the area before the foundation of the city, and instituted the sacrifice that took place at the Ara Maxima in his honour.<sup>52</sup> The cult involved the offering of a heifer, followed by a public banquet, and it had been performed by urban praetors since at least the fourth century BC.<sup>53</sup> This is recorded in an inscribed altar set up a few weeks after the celebration, on 20 September 321: 'To the god Hercules *invictus*. Marcus Iunius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Faustus Paulinus, of *clarissimus* rank, urban praetor, gave this offering.'<sup>54</sup> The celebration led by Paulinus in 321 was part of a long history, which was still strong at that time. Six of the eight dedications to Hercules discovered in the same area are datable to the late third or early fourth century.<sup>55</sup>

The involvement of magistrates in the city's religious life was profoundly transformed in the first half of the fourth century. In a law addressed in 323 to the deputy praetorian prefect Helpidius, the emperor Constantine determined that Christians could not be forced to perform lustral sacrifices, a type of ritual that until then had been closely connected with the performance of official functions.<sup>56</sup> The law was not directed to all magistrates, but it shows that the intimate link between public office and religious engagement (here disqualified as *superstitio*) was not seen as necessary for the performance of public functions anymore. In Rome, the altars set up by Paulinus and his colleagues in the Forum Boarium were the last dedications in the area: even if the cult continued, there is no evidence for the involvement of praetors in it. It is not a coincidence that there is no evidence for the performance of these rites by magistrates after the reign of Constantius II, and that the last documented sacrifice performed by a Roman official dates to 359 (by the urban prefect to the Dioscuri, in Ostia).<sup>57</sup> Although religiously committed officials were still able to participate in festivals and ceremonies, this was no longer obligatory, and it would become increasingly rare.

<sup>51</sup> See Coarelli (1988) 60–105 for the topography of the cults of Hercules in this area (pp. 61–77 for the *ara maxima*). See also, for the altar, the discussion of Fucicello (2001) and (2011) 26–38; for the history of the complex, see Torelli (2006).

<sup>52</sup> The tradition is recorded in Livy, 1.7.4–15 and Vergil, *Aen.* 8.184–305; a version of the story is told in *CIL* VI, 313 = *EDR* 029414 (an altar dedicated to Hercules).

<sup>53</sup> See Scheid (2012) 296 for the festival. See also Livy, 9.29.9 and 9.34.18–19, with *RE* 22.2 (1954) coll. 1852–3, s.v. 'Praetor', for the involvement of urban praetors.

<sup>54</sup> *CIL* VI, 315 = *EDR* 122444: 'Deo / Herculi Inv(icto). / M(arcus) Iun(ius) Caesonius / Nicomachus Anicius / Faustus Paulinus, / c(larissimus) p(raetor) u(rbanus), d(ono) d(edit). [On the side] D(e)d(icata) XII Kal(endas) Octob(res), / Crispo et Constanti/no Caes(airbus) II cons(ulibus).'

<sup>55</sup> Severan: *CIL* VI, 312 = *EDR* 121805 and *CIL* VI, 313 = *EDR* 029414; late third to early fourth century: *CIL* VI, 314a–d = *EDR* 142358 (four dedications), *CIL* VI, 317 = *EDR* 137319 and *CIL* VI, 315 = *EDR* 122444 (our altar); *CIL* VI, 316 = *EDR* 121718 cannot be securely dated, but it is probably from the late third to early fourth century.

<sup>56</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.2.5; see Curran (2000) 174 (who mistakenly identifies Helpidius as *vicarius urbis Romae*).

<sup>57</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 19.10.4.

Imperial and city officials did not stop influencing religious life, however. A good example of this is the involvement of urban prefects in the crisis that followed the death of the bishop Liberius, in September 366. Two new bishops were elected, Ursinus and Damasus, only a few days apart from each other, by different groups within the Christian community—a division that soon led to conflict.<sup>58</sup> According to the so-called *Gesta Liberii*, the main source of information for the beginning of the crisis (and clearly pro-Ursinian), Damasus tried to get rid of the opposition by bribing the urban prefect Viventius and the prefect of the *annona* Iulianus, securing the exile of Ursinus and two deacons.<sup>59</sup> Faced with Christian antagonism and violence, Viventius was forced to withdraw to the suburbs.<sup>60</sup> The escalation of the conflict led the emperors to intervene, and they did it through their main officials in the city, the prefects.<sup>61</sup> One year after the beginning of the crisis, Praetextatus was instructed to allow the return of Ursinus to Rome (in 367).<sup>62</sup> Trouble ensued, Ursinus was exiled again and Praetextatus was told to return the last church held by the dissenters to Damasus.<sup>63</sup> The same prefect was told, in January 368, to expel all the associates of Ursinus from the city.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of 368, the new prefect Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius was ordered to deny the right of Ursinians to religious service and assembly within a radius of twenty miles around the city.<sup>65</sup> The issue resurfaced in the following years, and the *vicarius urbis* Aquilinus and his officials were accused of leniency in dealing with Ursinus and his supporters.<sup>66</sup> The crisis only ended in 385, with the election of Damasus' successor Siricius, when the urban prefect Pinianus was congratulated by the court for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.<sup>67</sup>

The involvement of Roman aristocrats in the episcopal crisis had a crucial impact on the life and history of the Christian community. Although the imperial letters were naturally concerned with putting an end to the conflict,<sup>68</sup> the actions of prefects and other officials helped to define the outcome of a violent struggle for power within the clergy that had a direct impact not only in the government of the Roman church, but also on the enforcement of religious orthodoxy. Between 366 and 385, aristocrats—including the notorious pagan Praetextatus—exercised direct influence in the definition of a powerful religious group, confiscating places of worship, denying the right of congregation and to religious service, and expelling dissenting voices from the city. The extent to which prefects could intervene in

<sup>58</sup> Lizzi Testa (2004) 93–170 provides a fine analysis of the crisis and of the evidence available. See also De Spirito (1994).

<sup>59</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 1.6; the *Gesta* was probably written soon after 368, by a supporter of Ursinus: see Pietri (1976) 408.

<sup>60</sup> *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.11–12.

<sup>61</sup> Clemente (2011) is essential for this discussion.

<sup>62</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 6.

<sup>64</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 8; Olybrius was congratulated for his actions, see *Coll. Avell.* 10.

<sup>66</sup> See *Coll. Avell.* 11 and 12, addressed to the prefect Ampelius and to the *vicarius* Maximinus; and *Coll. Avell.* 13, *De rebaptizatoribus*, for Aquilinus; see 13.10 for the reference to the *apparitores*.

<sup>67</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 4.

<sup>68</sup> e.g. *Coll. Avell.* 6.1; 7.2; 8.1.

Rome's religious life is further highlighted by the *Libellus precum*, a letter addressed in 383/384 to the imperial court in Constantinople by two Roman clerics of an ecclesiastical faction persecuted by Damasus. According to its author, after being forbidden from meeting in public, they were persecuted by Damasus and by public officials in the houses where they met. The presbyter Macarius, one of the leaders of the group, was tortured, while Damasus employed pagan lawyers (*gentiles scolastici*) and resorted to the urban prefect Bassus to secure the punishment of the dissidents.<sup>69</sup> The latter, however, being a good Christian and well versed in the doctrine (in the opinion of the persecuted), refused to take action against the accused, enraging the bishop.<sup>70</sup> This was a striking initiative for a secular official, as it defied the opinion of Damasus, a bishop who had been recently acknowledged in imperial legislation as the guarantor of orthodoxy.<sup>71</sup> The accusations of leniency and bribery in the imperial letters, as well as the praise of the 'good Christian' Bassus in the *Libellus precum*, are a good indication of the discretionary power of aristocrats in official positions.

Late antique prefects and other officials still exercised great influence over religious activities whenever the opportunity arose, irrespectively of their personal sympathies. This remained true particularly at times of crisis, such as contested episcopal elections like the choice of the successor of Zosimus, in 418.<sup>72</sup> Aristocrats also contributed to the enforcement of orthodoxy. Between the middle of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, prefects and other officials (including at least one pagan) received a series of edicts instructing them to persecute and expel from the city members of different groups that defied orthodoxy and episcopal authority.<sup>73</sup> When Andromachus sponsored the celebration of the Lupercalia, at the end of the fifth century, and turned it into an opportunity for criticizing bishop Gelasius, he was following a long tradition of official engagement with the city's sacred life.

### Personal religion

Since the origins of the city, personal involvement, be it as the chief of a household or patron of a specific group, had been a crucial way through which aristocrats could influence religious life.<sup>74</sup> Houses were important religious spaces (and not just in Rome), and the cults and rituals celebrated within the household were key elements in the life and identity of its members.<sup>75</sup> Worshipping at home, members

<sup>69</sup> *Lib. precum* 78–83. <sup>70</sup> *Lib. precum* 84.

<sup>71</sup> In the famous 'edict of Thessalonica', from 380: *Cod. Theod.* 16.1.2. See Clemente (2011) 380.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. *Coll. Avell.* 14–19; also Pietri (1976) 452–60.

<sup>73</sup> e.g. *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.3 (372); 16.5.53 (398); 16.5.40 (407); and 16.5.62 (425). *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.18 (389) was addressed to Ceionius Rufius Albinus, a pagan.

<sup>74</sup> Fustel de Coulanges (1870) saw this as one of the defining characteristics of the ancient city.

<sup>75</sup> See Bodel and Olyan (2008) for a general view; Bodel (2008B) for Rome.

of the *familia* could favour different Lares, the Penates, and the *genius* of the house-owner (and the emperor).<sup>76</sup> *Domus* were, in this way, communities that included human and super-natural members over which their owners had great influence. This was acknowledged by the Christian Prudentius in his poem attacking traditional cults, when he describes the bringing up of a young Roman at home:

The little one had looked at a figure in the shape of Fortune, with her wealthy horn, standing in the house, a hallowed stone, and watched his mother pale-faced in prayer before it. Then, raised on his nurse's shoulder, he too pressed his lips to the flint and rubbed it with them, pouring out his childish petitions, asking for riches from a sightless stone, and convinced that all one's wishes must be sought from thence.<sup>77</sup>

Houses were important centres of religious activity, combining different cults in a space frequented by a very particular form of community. During works carried out for the opening of modern-day via Giovanni Lanza, in 1883–4, excavators discovered a fourth-century *domus* (dated on the basis of its masonry style) that incorporated early imperial structures, including a richly decorated nymphaeum.<sup>78</sup> The house also contained a small shrine (Fig. 5.1), a *lararium* decorated with busts and statuettes, as well as a large statue of Isis-Fortuna, all datable to the second century.<sup>79</sup> Next to the shrine, an opening gave access to a staircase that led to an underground Mithraic cave. The combination of Isiac and Mithraic structures in this same space shows that *domus* could be the venue for innovative religious syntheses in fourth-century paganism, associating cults that, although not part of the traditional civic religion, were not domestic or private either. The house on Via Giovanni Lanza was not a unique case. Robert Coates-Stephens identified a number of late antique houses in Rome with an eclectic collection of statues of deities, indicating that this was a widespread practice.<sup>80</sup>

Inscriptions in altars and statue bases found in Rome also attest to the fact that members of the pagan elite combined different priesthoods, related to a variety of cults.<sup>81</sup> At least since the second century AD, Roman aristocrats had grown used to accumulating public and official priesthoods. Aristocrats claimed, in this way, a more prominent place in religious life. This assertive attitude of senators is well exemplified by a series of Mithraic altars discovered in the vicinity of the later

<sup>76</sup> See discussion in Sofroniew (2015) 31; Bodel (2008B) is essential.

<sup>77</sup> Prud., *C. Symm.* 1.205–11 (transl. Thomson).

<sup>78</sup> See, for the finds: Guidobaldi (1986) 194–8. It included a nymphaeum built in *opus vittatum*, and other structures in *opus mixtum*.

<sup>79</sup> Discussion in Ensoli (2000) 280 (cat. nn. 146–60 for the statues and the *domus*); see also Calzini Gysens (1996A) and Sfameni (2012) 121–3.

<sup>80</sup> Coates-Stephens (2007) 178–9.

<sup>81</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 500 (*taurobolium* altar); *CIL* VI, 31940 = 41331 = *LSA* 1569 (statue base); *CIL* VI, 1778 = *LSA* 1473. See Mathews (1973).

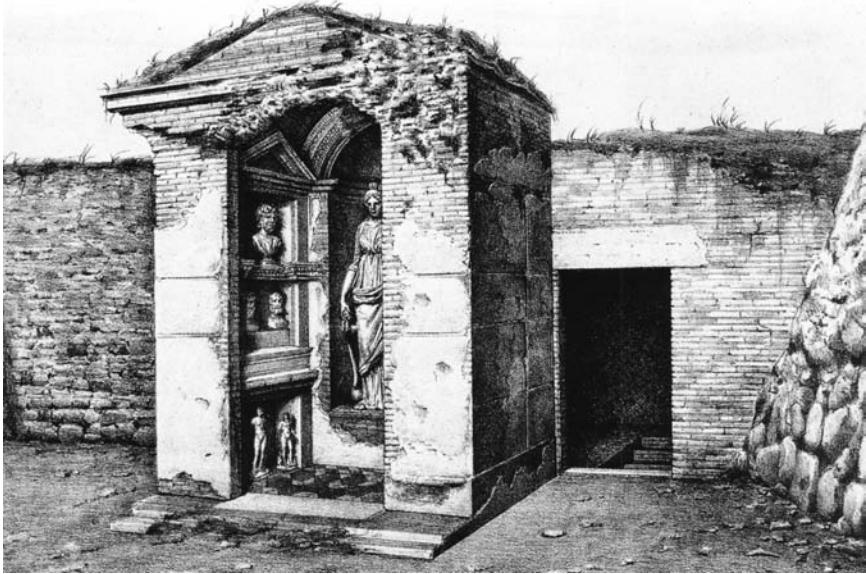


Fig. 5.1. The domestic shrine off Via Giovanni Lanza.

From C. L. Visconti, 'Del larario e del mitreo scoperti nell'Esquilino presso la chiesa di S. Marino ai Monti', *BullCom*, 1885, Tav. 3.

Basilica of San Silvestro in Capite, off Via Lata (modern-day Via del Corso).<sup>82</sup> Their inscriptions document a series of initiations into different Mithraic grades, datable to the years between 357 and 376.<sup>83</sup> The names of the priests officiating the ceremonies are recorded, the senators Nonius Victor Olympius and his son, Aurelius Victor Augentius. Unusually, the names of the initiates are not mentioned, with only one exception: Aemilianus Corfo Olympius, not by coincidence a son of the priest Augentius.<sup>84</sup> A few years later (the date is not recorded), Tamesius Olympius Augentius built a Mithraic cave in this same complex, as a metric inscription found in the area informs us:

Once the grandfather Victor, devoted to heaven and the stars, founded the temple of Apollo with an expenditure worthy of a king. His grandson, who has his grandfather's name, surpasses him in piety: he builds a cave and does not seek your expenses from Rome. Pious men prefer loss to gain. Who is wealthier than he, who, a parsimonious heir, shares his goods with the gods?<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Calzini Gysens (1996B) is a good starting-point.

<sup>83</sup> Seven dedications in total: *CIL* VI, 749–53 (*CIL* VI, 751–2 contain two dedications each).

<sup>84</sup> *CIL* VI, 751b = *EDR* 073473; see *PLRE* I, Olympius 18 and Augentius 2 for the priests.

<sup>85</sup> *CIL* VI, 754 = *EDR* 167157: 'Olim Victor avus, caelo devotus et astris, / regali sumptu Phoebeia templa locavit. / Hunc superat pietate nepos, cui nomen avitum est: / antra facit, sumptusque tuos nec Roma requirit. / Damna piis meliora lucro: quis ditior illo est, / qui cum caelicolis parcus bona dividit heres.'



The inscription was carved into a large block of marble (2.25 x 0.54 m), with fittings for statues on the top—presumably the statues of Augustus and his grandfather Victor. The precise context for the Mithraeum of the Olympii remains uncertain. The provenance of the inscriptions, in the area where the Aurelianic Temple of Sun was built, has led scholars to suggest that it was a part of that larger structure.<sup>86</sup> However, the strong familial character of the inscriptions suggests a private space, possibly a *domus* owned by the family in that neighbourhood.<sup>87</sup> The reference to both a *templum* and an *antrum* (the Mithraic cave), together with the dimensions of the altars and decorative elements discovered in the same area suggests a relatively large complex, but this does not preclude a domestic structure.<sup>88</sup> In any case, it is very likely that the Mithraeum was not limited to the inner community of the household of the Olympii, but also involved friends and clients.

The role claimed by the Olympii before their Mithraic community is particularly worthy of note. They appear, in the inscriptions, as actively engaged in these ceremonies, officiating them as priests. This is in stark contrast with what we know about Mithraism for previous centuries, as the evidence available indicates that it had been primarily associated with soldiers, slaves, and freedmen—a very different social world from that of the late Roman nobility.<sup>89</sup> These people certainly continued to take part in the cult, but now they had members of an important and wealthy family presiding over their rites. The inscriptions do not omit the names of the actual initiates only, but also make no reference to the deity celebrated, Mithras.<sup>90</sup> We should be careful not to assume that the worship of Mithras had become a monopoly of the Roman elite in the fourth century: the evidence is too poor for any sweeping generalization.<sup>91</sup> But the presence of Mithraea in some of the grander houses of late antique Rome, such as the one on Via Giovanni Lanza, the (possible) *domus* of the Olympii, and the *domus* of the Nummii, on the Quirinal, shows that for certain house owners active participation in Mithraism was a form of social promotion as much as of social control.<sup>92</sup> The fact that different aristocrats are recorded as *pater patrum* or as *pater sacrorum*, the main Mithraic priesthood, indicates that this was not an unusual strategy for members of this group.<sup>93</sup>

The authority exercised by members of the aristocracy over religious issues was particularly relevant in the case of the city's growing Christian community. This was a very diverse social and religious grouping, formed by sub-groups with

<sup>86</sup> e.g. by Coarelli (1979) 73; also in the same volume, Gallo (1979).

<sup>87</sup> Suggested by Cameron (2011) 143–4, for example.

<sup>88</sup> Although most of the inscriptions only survive in copy, they seem to have been large. See Lanciani (1989) 128 and (1994) 180. See also the account of Henzen (1868) 90–8 (esp. p. 92).

<sup>89</sup> See Griffith (2000). This was also noted by Lanciani (1889) 167.

<sup>90</sup> As observed by Beck (2006) 98. <sup>91</sup> See, for a note of caution, Børnebye (2007) 182.

<sup>92</sup> On the *domus* of the Nummii, see Coarelli (2014) 271–81.

<sup>93</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 47 = *EDR* 078374; *CIL* VI, 509 = *CCCA* III, 236 = *EDR* 106599; *CIL* VI, 510 = *CCCA* III, 242; *CIL* VI, 511 = *CCCA* III, 243; *CIL* VI, 1675 = *LSA* 1392; and *CIL* VI, 1779 = *EDR* 121930.

various theological inclinations.<sup>94</sup> Although bishops played a dominating role, their authority and control over the faithful was not always guaranteed (as seen at times of episcopal elections). Aristocrats of different origins, personal interests, and financial standing were an integral part of these social and religious dynamics, and could represent a real challenge to episcopal power. There was, furthermore, a visible gap between members of *clarissimi* families—from the wealthiest to the humblest—and the clergy, and this social distance had a profound influence in the relationship between members of these two groups.<sup>95</sup>

The imposition of orthodoxy in the city required the affirmation of episcopal control over the *domus* of powerful members of the elite, men and women who were not accustomed to this type of interference.<sup>96</sup> The authors of the *Libellus precum*, for example, tell us that the followers of Macarius had resorted to meeting in private houses, until discovered and attacked by the supporters of Damasus.<sup>97</sup> Imperial legislation highlights the importance of domestic spaces determining, for example, that the houses in which the ‘wicked doctrine’ (*profana institutio*, i.e. Manicheism) was taught should be confiscated.<sup>98</sup> Houses were enclosed spaces, controlled by their owners. These were venues where aristocrats could express their sympathies, as well as protect and support their spiritual leaders.<sup>99</sup> Jerome praised the aristocrat Marcella for creating a religious community in her house, turning Rome into a new Jerusalem, showing that houses could be used to support the true faith (or what was claimed as such) as much as they could provide a platform for error.<sup>100</sup> Members of the Roman elite were thus able to continue influencing the city’s religious life, even in a context of profound historical transformations.

## Religious Rituals and Ceremonies

Religious celebrations occupied an important place in the Roman calendar. Members of the Roman elite took part in these occasions, whether as official or private participants. The Life of Aurelian, in the *Historia Augusta*, opens with the account of a conversation between Flavius Vopiscus, presumed author of the biography, and the urban prefect Iunius Tiberianus, who was travelling in his vehicle after having completed the ceremonies of the Hilaria, on 25 March. The

<sup>94</sup> A point well argued in Brown (2012) 250–8.

<sup>95</sup> See especially the studies of Sotinel (1998); also (2006).

<sup>96</sup> See especially the work of Maier (1995A) and (1995B). For a more comprehensive analysis of this issue, see Bowes (2008).

<sup>97</sup> *Lib. precum* 79–80.

<sup>98</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.3 (372); see also Maier (1995A) and (1995B).

<sup>99</sup> This is well explored, with reference to the Pelagian crisis, by Brown (1972). For a more recent discussion, see Brown (2012) 275–80. See Bowes (2008) 76–9 (for Rome).

<sup>100</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 127.8. See Curran (2000) 283–9.

Hilaria was a day of rejoicing, 'when everything that is said and done should be of a joyous nature', and was part of the celebrations of Magna Mater and Attis.<sup>101</sup> After finishing the celebrations on the Palatine, where the temple of the goddess was located, the prefect proceeded in his official chariot through some of the busiest and most splendid parts of the city, the Forum and the Via Lata, passing by the Temple of the Sun.<sup>102</sup> In a crowded city like Rome, days of public religious celebration were particularly important occasions for the powerful to be seen.

The fictional anecdote about Tiberianus (an actual historical figure) and the Hilaria might have struck readers as plausible, but it would have been a rare occasion in the late fourth century, when the *Life of Aurelian* was written.<sup>103</sup> As the link between public office and religious function was broken, fewer officials performed the traditional rituals. These were still important occasions, however—arguably more visible precisely because they were rare. Gelasius mentioned that the celebration of Castor and Pollux continued to be observed in the late fifth century, referring to the festival that took place on 27 January, either in Ostia or in Isola Sacra.<sup>104</sup> Another late text, the *Cosmographia* of the so-called pseudo-Aethicus, describes this celebration saying that the '*populus Romanus* processed with the urban prefect or consul in joyful festivity to celebrate the Castores'.<sup>105</sup> Like the Lupercalia (and the Hilaria before that), this was a highly publicized occasion that gained particular prominence with the participation of Rome's most important official. The reference to the celebration as a *sollemnitas iucunda* stresses its religious significance, even if no reference is made to sacrifices—an aspect about which Gelasius had no doubts.

More than a decline in the frequency of pagan festivals, it was their place in city life that changed. In 408, during the first siege of the city by Alaric and his troops, the urban prefect Gabinius Barbarus Pompeianus encountered a group of 'Etruscans' who warned him that Rome could be saved from its besiegers through prayer to the gods and the performance of ancestral rites.<sup>106</sup> According to Zosimus, Pompeianus (a pagan) sought permission from the bishop Innocentius, who agreed with the performance of pagan rituals in private. This was not acceptable to the 'Etruscans', however, who insisted that the ceremonies could only work if publicly funded and performed by members of the Senate in the public spaces of the city. In other words, as an official and civic celebration.

<sup>101</sup> *SHA, Aur.* 1.1–2: '[...] omnia festa et fieri debere scimus et dici [...]']; on the *Hilaria* and the cult of Magna Mater, see M. Salzmann (1990) 164–9.

<sup>102</sup> *SHA, Aur.* 1.2–3.

<sup>103</sup> There were two urban prefects named Iunius Tiberianus, one in 291–2 and his probable son in 303–5; see the comments of Chastagnol (1994A) cxvii.

<sup>104</sup> Gelas., *Adv. Androm.* 18; the festival also appears in the Calendar of Polemius Silvius. Its location remains the subject of controversy: see Bruun (2012).

<sup>105</sup> Ps-Aethicus, *Cosmog.* (ed. Riese, p. 83): '*populus Romanus cum urbis praefecto vel consule Castorum celebrandorum causa egreditur sollemnitate iocunda*'. The text is datable to the fifth century according to Lizzi Testa (2010) 275.

<sup>106</sup> Zos. 5.41.1–3; Soz. *HE* 9.6.3–5; see Olympe. *Frag.* 7.5 and 7.7.

However, not a single aristocrat dared to accept it, in spite of some of them still being pagan, and the attempt was abandoned.<sup>107</sup> Rather than officially banned, the old celebrations lost their close association with the Roman state.

### The celebration of the *Taurobolium*

In spite of these developments, pagan celebrations remained important occasions for ambitious aristocrats, at least during the fourth century. This is indicated, for example, by the case of the *taurobolium*, the ritual slaying of a bull that was part of the initiation into the cult of Magna Mater.<sup>108</sup> The most important complex connected to this ritual in Rome was the Phrygianum, a complex used for rituals and processions on the Vatican Hill, behind the Constantinian Basilica of S. Peter (Map 2).<sup>109</sup> A large number of inscribed and unscribed altars—most from the fourth century—was found in this area and in its neighbourhood, recording the performance of the *taurobolium* (frequently in conjunction with the sacrifice of a ram, the *criobolium*) by members of the Roman aristocracy, of different standing.<sup>110</sup> The inscriptions emphasize different aspects of each worshipper's identity: priesthoods, family links, and even official positions, including an urban prefect who was still in office.<sup>111</sup> Virtually all dedications mention the fact that the initiation was undertaken by an individual of *clarissimus* rank, reminding viewers of the high status of the initiates.<sup>112</sup> For example, Alfeius Caeionius Iulianus, *tauroboliate* in 374, would go on to become governor of Numidia and vicar of Africa, but only after having dedicated an altar in the Phrygianum.<sup>113</sup> In origin a private initiation, the late antique *taurobolium* became a public event, in which

<sup>107</sup> Zos. 5.41.1–3. See the comments of Paschoud (1986) 275–80.

<sup>108</sup> See, on this ritual, Alvar (2008) 261–82; also McLynn (1996).

<sup>109</sup> Liverani (2008A), expanding on Liverani (1999B) 28–32.

<sup>110</sup> See, for the inscribed altars, *CIL* VI, 30780 = *IG* XIV, 1020 = *CCCA* III, 237 (? Late third to early fourth century); *CIL* VI, 497 = *CCCA* III, 226 = *EDR* 160655 (305); *EDR* 150917 = Carbonell Manils (2015) 264 n. 9 (307/312); *CIL* VI, 508 = *CCCA* III, 235 = *EDR* 151230 = Carbonell Manils (2015) 261 n. 2 (319); *CIL* VI, 498 = *CCC* III, 227 = *EDR* 126726 (350); *CIL* VI, 499 = *CCCA* III, 228 (374); *CIL* VI, 500 = *CCCA* III, 229 (377); *CIL* VI, 501 = *CCCA* III, 230 (383); *CIL* VI, 502 = *CCCA* III, 231 (383); *CIL* VI, 503 = *CCCA* III, 232 = *EDR* 121506 (390); found in the vicinity of the basilica and probably from the same context: *IGUR* I, 130 = *IG* XIV, 1045 = *CCCA* III, 245 (? third century); *IGUR* I, 127 = *CCCA* III, 239 (mid-fourth century); *AE* 1953, 237 = *CCCA* III, 240 = *EDR* 073946 (360–88); *AE* 1953, 238 = *CCCA* III, 241b = *EDR* 073947 (374); *AE* 1971, 35 = *CCCA* III, 245a = *EDR* 075070 (376); *CIL* VI, 504 = *CCCA* III, 233 = *EDR* 151218 (376); *CIL* VI, 512 = *CCCA* III, 244 = *EDR* 144484 (390); of unknown provenance, but possibly from the same context: *CIL* VI, 30966 = *IG* XIV, 1019 = *CCCA* III, 238 = *EDR* 107605 (377), dedicated by Sabina, daughter of Volusianus. See Liverani (2008A) 41 (who also includes *CIL* VI, 488) and Carbonell Manils (2015).

<sup>111</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 500 and 501 for priesthoods; 502, 512, and 30,966 for family links; 499 and 512 for official positions.

<sup>112</sup> The exceptions are *CIL* VI, 30780 and *IGUR* I, 127. *CIL* VI, 30966 = *EDR* 107605 was dedicated by the daughter of a senator, and *AE* 1971, 35 is fragmentary, but almost certainly refers to a *clarissimus*.

<sup>113</sup> *AE* 1953, 238; see *PLRE* I, Iulianus 25. See the detailed discussion in Orlandi (2011).

observers were also participants: according to Prudentius, everyone hailed and acclaimed the priest from afar when he appeared.<sup>114</sup> The large complex on the Vatican Hill was adequate for these grand occasions, attended by committed worshippers as well as by their clients and friends.

The *taurobolium* inscriptions also suggest a much more assertive role for the aristocrats involved. Whereas earlier dedications mention the role of priests in the rituals, the Vatican inscriptions tend to ignore them.<sup>115</sup> In the case of the Roman Phrygianum, only one altar datable to 319 refers to a *sacerdos Phryx maximus* in the initiation of Serapias, a woman who was not a member of the senatorial order. In this case, however, the ceremony was attended by the *clarissimi* members of the college of the *XVviri sacris faciundis*.<sup>116</sup> Instead, the altars from the Phrygianum stress the role of the aristocrats taking part in the initiation, a development that has led scholars to speak of the 'personalization' or 'privatization' of the ritual.<sup>117</sup> The celebration of the *taurobolium* was, in this respect, in stark contrast with the initiations into the cult of Mithras taking place in the Mithraeum of the Olympii, where the emphasis was on the aristocratic priests. In both cases, however, we see an open appropriation of religious occasions by members of the aristocracy. Furthermore, although the *taurobolium* inscriptions record the involvement of the initiates in different priesthoods, they are celebrated as individuals, and not as members of priestly colleges or of a specific religious group. In this sense, the altars can be seen as good evidence for the senatorial takeover of the cult. The fact that not one of the late antique altars from Rome, whether from the Phrygianum or not, records the performance of sacrifices on behalf of emperors (something that was important in earlier dedications) is also revealing of this shift in the nature of the ritual.<sup>118</sup>

Christian writers criticized worshippers of Magna Mater and other cults for subjecting themselves to priests of a lowly social and moral profile.<sup>119</sup> The so-called Ambrosiaster describes such cults as shameful celebrations performed in secret, due to pagans being ashamed of participating in such indignities.<sup>120</sup> The *taurobolium* inscriptions present a different picture, however, stressing the involvement of aristocrats in the life of their religious community. The Vatican complex of Magna Mater was thus turned into a venue for the interaction between individual piety, personal standing, and public commemoration, in a more grandiose setting than the smaller face-to-face Mithraic communities gathered in

<sup>114</sup> Prud., *Perist.* 10.148; see McLynn (1996) 318.

<sup>115</sup> e.g. *CIL* XIII, 1751; see Alvar (2008) 265–8.

<sup>116</sup> *CIL* VI, 508 = *CCCA* III, 235 = *EDR* 151230 = Carbonell Manils (2015) 261 n. 2.

<sup>117</sup> McLynn (1996) 323; also Salzman (2011B) 172–3.

<sup>118</sup> As noted by Salzman (2011B) 173; but note that there had always been private sacrifices, as pointed out by Alvar (2008) 266.

<sup>119</sup> Aug., *Civ. Dei* 2.4; *Carmen contra paganos* 98–109; see also Prud., *Perist.* 10.1061–75 and the *Carmen contra senatorem* 9–14.

<sup>120</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 114.4.8; 6.18; also 114.7.4–10, for priests.

aristocratic *domus*. By participating in different cults, in different spatial contexts, pagan aristocrats had access to a wide range of social and spiritual interactions. In the case of the initiation into the cult of Magna Mater, Christian polemic was more acerbic precisely because these were public and very visible celebrations, taking place right next to the Basilica of the apostle Peter.

Beyond the most immediate circle of its initiates, the cult of the Great Mother occupied an important place in the religious life of late antique Rome. Public festivals dedicated to this goddess and her consort Attis extended from 15 (*cana intrat*) to 27 March (*lavatio*), and the games associated with her, the *Ludi Megalesiaci*, took place between 4 and 10 April.<sup>121</sup> Besides the Phrygianum, they incorporated different parts of the city, including the Circus Maximus, the Temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine, and the Basilica Hilariana on the Caelian Hill.<sup>122</sup> Other *taurobolium* altars, similar to the ones from the Vatican, were found in different parts of the city, suggesting that other areas could be used for these rites.<sup>123</sup> It is impossible to know whether all the celebrations dedicated to the goddess continued until the end of the fourth century, but the recent excavation of the Basilica Hilariana suggests that at least some of them did. The complex was used as headquarters by the *dendrophori*, a college associated with the cult, and it was the site where the sacred pine associated with Attis was kept, remaining in use for cultic purposes until the first decades of the fifth century.<sup>124</sup>

Another festival that remained important until at least the late fourth century—and in which senators played an important part—was the *lavatio*, on 27 March. It consisted in the procession of the sacred stone that represented Cybele from her temple on the Palatine to a sanctuary on the margins of the river Almo, next to the Via Appia.<sup>125</sup> A number of epigraphic and other objects (mainly sculpted terracotta reliefs) found between the first and third miles of the Via Appia attest to the existence of such a cult centre.<sup>126</sup> Ammianus mentions the festival as still taking place in the last quarter of the fourth century, and Prudentius describes the ritual by emphasizing the involvement of aristocrats:

I know that nobles in their togas bare their feet before the car at the rites of the Idaean Mother. A little black stone encased in silver with a woman's features is to be carried forth sitting in a chariot, and you go in front leading it to the washing

<sup>121</sup> As recorded in the Calendar of 354: see *InscrIt* 13.2, pp. 243 (March) and 245 (April). For a discussion of these festive dates and calendars, see Salzman (1990) 164–9 and Fishwick (1966).

<sup>122</sup> See discussion in Pensabene (2008).

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, *CIL* VI, 505–6 (Via Appia); 510 (Monti); 511 (Via Lata, near the Aqua Virgo).

<sup>124</sup> See C. Pavolini, in Palazzo and Pavolini (2013) for the later phases of the cult. See also Diosono (2016) 263–8.

<sup>125</sup> See Alvar (2008) 286–8 for the festival and its history.

<sup>126</sup> See *CCCA* III, 350–4. *CIL* VI, 10098 = *CCCA* III, 355 = *EDR* 109247, found in the same area but probably not belonging to it, might refer to this centre in l. 1: 'Qui colitis Cybelem et phryga plangitis Attin...' (*contra* Sbriglione (2011)).

place with your shoes off, bruising your feet on the ground, till you come to Almo's little stream.<sup>127</sup>

It is certain that the actual performance of the ritual, carrying and washing the stone, was left to specialists of a very different social standing—including the scandalous priests scorned by Christian writers. But in the eyes of Prudentius, at least, the public involvement of powerful senators, surrounded by their families, friends, and clients, attracted most of the attention.

### Christian liturgy and aristocratic celebration

It was not only pagan aristocrats who took religious rituals as opportunities for celebrating their power and social standing. Although not able to officiate their ceremonies, Christian senators also found many opportunities for self-display. Writing between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, Jerome provides us with a lively picture of Christian ceremonies. Curiously for a man of the Church, his depiction is openly negative. As he sees them, these were crowded and noisy public occasions, which should be either avoided or frequented with utmost discretion by the pious. Marcella, for example, was praised for visiting basilicas to pray quietly, 'avoiding the throngs of people', while Asella was praised for visiting the tombs of the martyrs unnoticed. Pacatula, on her turn, was admonished not to frequent crowded churches, which basically meant all the major celebrations in Rome.<sup>128</sup> It was a difficult balancing act. In the letters of Jerome, Roman aristocrats were presented with carefully constructed models of self-effacement that contradicted the very principles of aristocratic society.<sup>129</sup> Jerome himself proposed a different model, when describing the spectacular and dramatic baptism of Fabiola, as seen in Chapter 4.<sup>130</sup> The public involvement of members of the nobility was celebrated by a contemporary with equally unquestionable Christian credentials, Prudentius, who observed that the 'ornaments of the Senate', once pagan priests, now eagerly kissed the threshold of the apostles and martyrs.<sup>131</sup> To many like him, participation in these festivities was a clear mark of a good Christian. It was this 'public quality' of everyday Christianity that made active engagement with the community and the Church a relevant component in aristocratic social strategies.

Over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, Roman bishops used the cult of martyrs and their relics as a way of asserting their spiritual authority over the

<sup>127</sup> Prud., *Perist.* 10.151–60 (transl. Thomson). See also Amm. Marc. 23.3.7.

<sup>128</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 127.4 (Marcella), 24.4 (Asella) and 128.4 (Pacatula).

<sup>129</sup> See, for a recent discussion of these issues, Cairn (2010); see also Brown (2012) 267.

<sup>130</sup> Pp. 146–7. <sup>131</sup> Prud., *Perist.* 2.517–20.

city, its calendar, and spaces.<sup>132</sup> Even in this case, however, aristocrats could still play a prominent role. The biographer of Melania the younger tells us how she spent a night in vigil at her family's chapel and attended the celebration of S. Lawrence the following day, in spite of being pregnant and against her parents' advice.<sup>133</sup> Throughout late antiquity, lay donors of different social extraction remained directly involved in the patronage of martyr shrines all over Rome and its surrounds.<sup>134</sup> On the Caelian Hill, a *titulus* dedicated by the aristocrat Pammachius, the modern-day Basilica of S. Giovanni e Paolo, was built on top of a fourth-century *domus*. The house, which incorporated earlier structures (including an *insula* and a *balneum*), was equipped with a small room that, because of its decoration with paintings representing scenes of a martyrdom, has been identified as a space for the worship of relics.<sup>135</sup> Although the archaeology of the building(s) and the relationship between the house and the church built by Pammachius remains obscure, it seems clear that this is an example of private worship of martyrs, probably in the form of their relics. In spite of its domestic origins, the association between the building and the relics was widely acknowledged in later periods. This is attested to in the seventh-century *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*, where the Basilica of S. Giovanni e Paolo is the only building inside the wall mentioned as housing relics.<sup>136</sup> Participation in the cult of saints—whether as an attendant or as a patron—allowed aristocrats to turn religious occasions into opportunities for celebrating their standing in Roman society, making use of different parts of the city, from houses to churches. The image of Christian (as well as pagan) Rome was thus given a clear aristocratic overtone.

### Christian and Pagan Buildings

Roman aristocrats played a crucial role in the development of late antique Rome's religious topography. Different from what was seen in terms of secular structures, with which they were also deeply involved, the number of new religious foundations did not decline in late antiquity. Although the construction of magnificent buildings like the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore or that of Saint Paul remained exceptional, the number of smaller complexes grew over the fourth and fifth centuries. By the end of our period, areas like the vicinity of Saint Peter's on the Vatican or Saint Lawrence's on the Via Tiburtina were small settlements equipped

<sup>132</sup> The essential reference remains Pietri (1976) 595–624; see more recently Sághy (2000) and Trout (2005).

<sup>133</sup> *V. Mel. Gr.* 6; *V. Mel. Lat.* 5.1–3.

<sup>134</sup> This is discussed by Fiocchi Nicolai (1994) and (2007).

<sup>135</sup> See Brenk (1995); see also discussion in Bowes (2008) 88–92 and more recently by P. Palazzo and C. Pavolini, in Englen (2014) 280–4.

<sup>136</sup> Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice Topografico* II, 72.



with porticoes, monasteries, hospitals, and cemeteries.<sup>137</sup> Whereas urban prefects and their office dominated secular building activities in late antique Rome, religious building was carried out by aristocrats with their own funds and mostly out of their own personal interests. Although Christianity became increasingly associated with the government of the city (and of the empire), it never occupied the same official space as the temples of the early imperial period, with dedicated secular officials overseeing the maintenance and restoration of its buildings, for example. Most crucially, the evolution of late antique Rome's religious topography was to a very large extent controlled by a relatively newcomer to Roman society, the Christian bishop.

In the first half of the fourth century, the establishment of a specifically Christian topography was still under the firm control of members of the imperial family, who sponsored basilicas and cemeteries according to their own sympathies, even if in agreement with the bishop.<sup>138</sup> Imperial protagonism in religious building was not something new. It went back to Augustus, as the newly established *princeps* and his closest associates built new temples and promoted the restoration of older ones throughout the city.<sup>139</sup> Third-century emperors dedicated important religious structures, contributing to the great religious dynamism of the period.<sup>140</sup> Other groups also took part in this process. The Senate, as a unified political body, was also involved in the building of religious structures, most frequently destined to the imperial cult.<sup>141</sup> Wealthy patrons could also be responsible for important buildings, such as the Basilica Hilariana, on the Caelian, built by the *margaritarius* (pearl trader) Marcus Poblicius Hilarus in the second century.<sup>142</sup> In general, however, between the reigns of Augustus and Constantius II, religious building remained largely associated with the ruling emperors, both as builders and as the deities being celebrated.<sup>143</sup> This situation changed in the course of the fourth century.

### Officials and religious buildings

Roman officials had traditionally been responsible for the preservation and restoration of temples and shrines. Since the beginning of the empire, this service had been responsibility of the *curator aedium sacrarum*, an official appointed by

<sup>137</sup> See Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004) for a regional survey of the city at the end of our period.

<sup>138</sup> See Pietri (1976) 3–69; Krautheimer (1980) 3–31.

<sup>139</sup> The main reference remains Augustus' *Res gestae*, 19–21, including a reference to the restoration of eighty-two temples (20). See also Zanker (1988) 104–10.

<sup>140</sup> Curran (2000) 8–17.

<sup>141</sup> e.g. the Temple of Vespasian (*CIL* VI, 931 = *EDR* 105656) and the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina (*CIL* VI, 1005 = *EDR* 104060), both in the Forum.

<sup>142</sup> See *CIL* VI, 30973b = *EDR* 121795.

<sup>143</sup> See the discussion of Scheid (2001).

the emperor.<sup>144</sup> The last *curator* attested is Valerius Comazon, mentioned in an inscription datable to 299.<sup>145</sup> The office was probably absorbed by the urban prefecture during the administrative reforms of the late third and early fourth century, disappearing in the course of the following decades.<sup>146</sup> As a result, urban prefects became responsible for the preservation of pagan structures. Ammianus, for example, praised Praetextatus (prefect in 367) for demolishing the walls of private structures that had been ‘irreverently’ built against the old temples.<sup>147</sup> It is not a coincidence that imperial legislation concerned with the restoration of public structures in Rome was addressed to pagan prefects.<sup>148</sup> The progress of Christianization made the involvement of the city’s most important official in the preservation of these monuments a point of political contention.<sup>149</sup> Lucius Aurelius Avianus Symmachus was warned, when prefect in 364, that Christians should never be appointed custodians of pagan structures.<sup>150</sup> His son Symmachus, prefect in 384, was forced to defend himself of the accusation that he was persecuting Christians while following an imperial order to investigate the spoliation of temples in Rome—as he pointed out, the investigation had not started, and he presented a letter of bishop Damasus himself as proof.<sup>151</sup>

In this context, the decision to use public funds to restore pagan buildings was all the more meaningful. Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus carried out unspecified works on a Temple of Apollo—probably Apollo Sosianus, by the Circus Flaminius—during his second term as prefect (357–9): ‘To sacred Apollo. Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, of *clarissimus* rank, twice prefect of the City, took care of the temple. Overseen by Flavius Claudius Evangelus, of *clarissimus* rank, count.’<sup>152</sup> As Silvio Panciera showed, another fragmentary block of marble, now in the Archaeological Museum of the University of Pavia, was inscribed with the same text and (certainly) came from the same place.<sup>153</sup> The existence of two copies of the text shows that, regardless of the actual substance and scale of the works (not mentioned in the inscription), Orfitus took care of publicizing them in a grand manner. Claudius Hermogenianus Caesarius, prefect in 374, built a porticus in connection with the Temple of *Bonus Eventus*, in the Campus Martius, monumentalizing the approach to the structure.<sup>154</sup> Perhaps a more interesting case was the restoration of the porticus of the *Dei Consentes*, in the Forum, by Praetextatus. As we saw in Chapter 3, it is probable that there was a personal reason for this

<sup>144</sup> See Daguet-Gagey (1997) 106–13 for a discussion of this office.

<sup>145</sup> IG XIV, 1026 = IGUR 191. See Daguet-Gagey (1997) 458–9 and PLRE I, Comazon.

<sup>146</sup> It is not mentioned in the *Notitia dignitatum*, for example: *Not. dig. occ.* 4.

<sup>147</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.9.10. <sup>148</sup> As seen in Chapter 3: p. 107.

<sup>149</sup> An issue explored in great detail by Lizzi (2001). <sup>150</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.1.1.

<sup>151</sup> Symm., *Relat.* 21.

<sup>152</sup> CIL VI, 45 = EDR 142032: ‘*Apollini sancto. / Memmius Vitrasius / Orfitus, v(ir) c(larissimus), / bis praef(ectus) urbi, / aedem providit, / curante Fl(avio) Claudio / Evangelo, v(iro) c(larissimo), comite*’. See PLRE I, Orfitus 3 for his prefecture; Viscogliosi (1993) 51 notes minor fourth-century works on the structure.

<sup>153</sup> AE 2013, 142 = EDR 142033; see Panciera (2013).

<sup>154</sup> Amm. Marc. 29.6.19.

restoration, as the famous pagan aristocrat had been proconsul of Achaia, when he was probably inspired by the original altar dedicated to the twelve gods on the Acropolis at Athens.<sup>155</sup>

Works on pagan structures are not attested to after the end of the fourth century, by which time the officially sponsored restoration of temples had certainly become an impossibility.<sup>156</sup> Christian prefects, however, were able to push for a more personal religious agenda, as we can see in the case of Flavius Macrobius Longinianus, prefect in 401–2. According to an inscription recorded in the ninth-century *Sylloge Laureshamnensis*, Longinianus was responsible for the building and dedication of a baptistery while in office:

Whoever chooses to erase the faults of previous sins and to relieve life of earthly stains, come here to the fountain of Christ and the sacred liquid, where indeed the body, disposition and inclinations are equally washed and the eternal gift is awarded through virtuous baptism. Longinianus, famous for the titles of his service, loyal to the court, and prefect of the City, built the home of the faith.<sup>157</sup>

Longinianus' baptistery was probably built in the titular Church of S. Anastasia, on the south-west corner of the Palatine Hill.<sup>158</sup> Although the identity of the founder and the date of foundation of this church remains uncertain (ranging from 366 to 384), it was an important building, occupying a prestigious location next to the Forum Boarium, the Circus Maximus, and the Palatine, being closely associated with episcopal power: it had been recently decorated by bishop Damasus himself—possibly its founder—as we are informed by a mosaic inscription.<sup>159</sup> Longinianus' initiative made this the earliest titular church equipped with a baptistery, a fact of striking importance in the liturgical and political life of the Christian community.

The sacrament of baptism had acquired greater importance in the last decades of the fourth century in Rome and the West, attracting the attention of bishops and members of the clergy. Bishop Siricius (384–99) had addressed letters to

<sup>155</sup> See discussion in Chapter 3, p. 104.

<sup>156</sup> The latest restoration in Rome is the Temple of Saturn, as seen in pp. 104–5; in the case of Ostia, the restoration of a *cella Herculis* in 393–4 (*AE* 1941, 66 = 1948, 127 = *EDR* 073709) probably refers to the restoration of a temple, but this has been called into question: Boin (2010); but see the convincing remarks of Pavolini (2014) 894–5 in favour of the traditional identification of a temple of Hercules.

<sup>157</sup> *CIL* VI, 41379 = De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 150 n. 19 = *ILCV* 92 = *EDR* 093610: 'Qui peccatorum sordes abolere priorum / terrenisq(ue) optas maculis absolvere vitam, / huc ades ad ((Christi)) fontem sacrumq(ue) liquorem, / corpus ubi ac mentes pariter sensusq(ue) lavantur / aeternumq(ue) datur casto baptismo munus. / Hanc autem fidei sedem construxit ab imo / militiae clarus titulis aulaeq(ue) fidelis / Romanaeq(ue) urbis p(rae)fectus Longinianus.'

<sup>158</sup> The inscription is recorded in the *Sylloge* simply as *ad fons*, which led scholars to suggest the Basilica of S. Peter; however, the fact that it is recorded between an inscription from S. Anastasia and another from S. Giovanni e Paolo, on the Caelian (respectively, De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 150 n. 18 and 20) strongly suggests S. Anastasia. See Pietri (1976) 490 n. 2 for a useful discussion.

<sup>159</sup> See, on the church, Cerrito (2011).

bishops in Spain and Gaul, trying to regulate who could perform baptism, and on what dates.<sup>160</sup> The issue of who could legitimately perform a baptism had already been a point of contention between Damasus and the Luciferians, and this theme appears especially in the writings of Jerome.<sup>161</sup> As Damasus affirmed in the inscription commemorating the construction of the baptistery at St. Peter's, 'one is the seat of Peter, one is the true baptismal font'.<sup>162</sup> A few decades later, Innocentius I affirmed, in a letter to Decentius of Gubbio, that although presbyters could perform it, baptism only became valid with the recognition of the bishop.<sup>163</sup> At a time when ecclesiastical politics and theological debates went hand in hand, the prefect Longinianus' work represented a powerful support for the bishop and his authority. But it was more than that: the text of the inscription is an eloquent statement in support of the purifying powers of baptism and the promise of eternal life. Contrary to what one might expect, however, it makes no reference to the intercession of the bishop, putting all the emphasis on the prefect, his political standing, and his own religious initiative.<sup>164</sup> Longinianus presented himself, in this way, as a legitimate agent in the definition of the liturgical life and topography of late antique Rome.

In spite of these striking examples, construction works by officials, both pagan and Christian, remained exceptional. In contrast with what we see in other sectors of public building, prefects appear as responsible for very few religious works in late antique Rome. A small number of inscriptions record the involvement of prefects and of a *tribunus praetorianus* in works carried out (probably) at the Basilica of S. Paul on the Via Ostiense between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>165</sup> A column at the Church of S. Maria in Domnica, on the Caelian Hill, bears an inscription recording a dedication by a prefect called Constantius at the beginning of the sixth century, but it was certainly brought from another building.<sup>166</sup> The small scale and number of these works is worthy of note, especially because so much of what we know about public building in Rome is based on the letter sent by the imperial court to the prefect Sallustius dealing with the building of S. Paul's in the 380s.<sup>167</sup> It is likely that the involvement of the most powerful imperial official in the city in the building of churches and religious

<sup>160</sup> Respectively, Siricius, *Ep.* 1.3 (*PL* 13.1134–5) and 10.10 (*PL* 13.1188). See comments in *PL* 13.1179–80 and Cosentino (2002) 127–8.

<sup>161</sup> See Ferguson (2009) 677–82 on Damasus and Jerome.

<sup>162</sup> *ICUR* n.s. II, 4096: 'Una Petri sedes, unum verumq(ue) lavacrum'; see also *Epigrammata Damasiana*, n. 4. On the structure, see Brandt (2013) 82–3.

<sup>163</sup> Innocentius, *Ep. Dec. Gub.* (*Ep.* 25) 3; also Ferguson (2009) 760–1.

<sup>164</sup> Differently from *CIL* VI, 41331a = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4097 (from S. Peter's), for example.

<sup>165</sup> *ILCV* 1857 = *AE* 2000, 187 (AD 390); *CIL* VI, 1762 = 41,399 = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4782 = *EDR* 093621 (440/448); *CIL* VI, 1666 = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4793 = *EDR* 111458 (523/524). The last two were found reused in the pavement of the church, and might be from other buildings.

<sup>166</sup> *CIL* VI, 1665 = *ILCV* 93 = *EDR* 111456. The church was probably only built after the Byzantine invasion: see Coates-Stephens (2012B).

<sup>167</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 3, discussed on p. 66.

structures was more significant than what is suggested by the epigraphic record. The fact that this involvement was not regularly publicized, however, indicates that we need to turn to private commissions if we want to understand the involvement of aristocrats in the redefinition of the city's religious landscape.

### Personal monuments

Throughout late antiquity, Roman aristocrats remained personally deeply involved in religious building. This was true of pagan structures—as it had been since Republican times—but became particularly important in the case of Christian buildings. The senatorial elite was, in fact, a key factor behind the so-called 'second foundation' of Christian Rome, the notable expansion of the Christian infrastructure that followed the imperially led projects of the early fourth century.<sup>168</sup> The establishment of the new religion in the specific context of late antique Rome offered many possibilities for members of the aristocracy to express their religious sympathies and social standing, in a way that had not been possible since the end of the Republican period. Senators built and decorated different types of structure, especially Christian, from hospitals and shelters for the poor to baptisteries and churches.<sup>169</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 2, members of the Roman elite built for a variety of reasons, including civic pride, the desire for a personal monument, and public utility. In the case of religious structures, building was also a way of expressing piety, a fact explicitly affirmed in inscriptions recording the fulfilment of pagan vows.<sup>170</sup> An inscribed base of a statue of Bacchus recorded: 'Eufranor made [this] Bacchus, whom Gallus, a consul of the *fasti*, honours with verse, incense, and ritual.'<sup>171</sup> Another fourth-century inscription recorded the dedication of a statue of Diana in clearly religious terms: 'Auxentius, of *clarissimus* rank, universally pious, restored to her proper sanctity and position the maiden goddess Diana, the dweller in shady groves, the subduer of wild beasts.'<sup>172</sup> We have no information about the context of this dedication, whether it was in a private shrine or a public sanctuary. But Auxentius, *ubique pius*, affirms his religious motivation explicitly, defining Diana as *ferarum domitrix* and *dea virgo*.

<sup>168</sup> See, for a detailed analysis (and coining of the expression), Pietri (1976) 461–574.

<sup>169</sup> See, among others, Guidobaldi (2001–2); Pietri (1981); L. Pietri (2002). See further discussion in Machado (2011).

<sup>170</sup> e.g. *CIL* VI, 402 = *EDR* 121423 and *CIL* VI, 433 (late third century); *CIL* VI, 846 = *EDR* 144485 (mid- to late fourth century). This was already expressed in earlier texts: Pliny, *Ep.* 4.1 and 9.39.

<sup>171</sup> *CIL* VI, 128 = *LSA* 1502: 'Fecerat Eufranor Bacchum, / quem Gallus honorat / fastorum consul, carmine, / ture, sacris'; see *PLRE* I, Gallus 2 for a possible identification.

<sup>172</sup> *CIL* VI, 124 = *LSA* 1505: '[Umbr]arum ac nemo/[r]um incolam, / [f]erarum domitricem, / [D]ianam deam virginem / Auxentius v(ir) c(larissimus) ubique / piuc [sic, pro pius] suo numini sedi/ que restituit'. *PLRE* I, Auxentius 5 suggests a late fourth-century date, but this cannot be proved.

The same emphasis can be seen in Christian dedications, where commissioners stress the fulfilment of vows and even the highly institutionalized episcopal biographies of the *Liber pontificalis* recorded a dedication by an aristocratic lady as being made ‘out of . . . devotion’.<sup>173</sup> Ecclesiastical writers saw building as a trait of pious men and women. Jerome, for example, described how Pammachius and Fabiola competed to see who would build the first *xenodochium* in Portus, until they decided to do it together.<sup>174</sup> The most important difference between traditional and Christian dedications (and not only buildings) is that the latter were seen as a form of securing salvation in the afterlife, a Christian notion that is not found in classical literature.<sup>175</sup> This is acknowledged even in negative arguments, where the faithful are warned that building in itself does not guarantee a blessed afterlife. Jerome reminded the presbyter Paulinus that the true believer should look after his soul, rather than just investing on building and decorating churches.<sup>176</sup> As he reminded the pious lady Demetrias, in another letter, she should abandon all wealth and embrace asceticism, leaving the building of churches to others.<sup>177</sup> Building could also lead to damnation, if it expressed an impious disposition. The Christian author of the *Carmen contra paganos* attacked an unspecified Symmachus for building a temple of Flora, ‘shameful mother of games and teacher of Venus’.<sup>178</sup> Scholars have discussed the identification of this temple, but there is no independent evidence for such restoration ever having taken place.<sup>179</sup> In this case, however, religious rhetoric is as instructive as actual building works. Religious zeal was a powerful driving force in the transformation of Rome’s religious topography. Besides putting an emphasis on personal salvation, the establishment of Christianity brought about a profound innovation in the way in which the practice of giving was conceived, and especially on who was to benefit from it.<sup>180</sup> *Xenodochia*, hospitals, and other structures dedicated to the care of people in need begin to appear in Rome in the late fourth century, and they can be safely considered an outcome of these changes.<sup>181</sup> The *xenodochium* built at Portus by Pammachius and Fabiola illustrates this new attitude; according to Jerome, one same virtue moved them, philanthropy (*humanitas*).<sup>182</sup>

<sup>173</sup> e.g. inscriptions: *CIL* VI, 41400 = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4125 = *EDR* 093622 (S. Peter’s); De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 149 n. 17 + 307 n. 5 = *CIL* VI, 41393 = *ILCV* 68 = *EDR* 093616 (Lateran); De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 151 n. 25 (San Lorenzo in Damaso); De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 150 n. 20 (S. Giovanni e Paolo). *Lib. pont.* I, 220, tells us that the church of S. Vitale was built *ex devotione Vestinae*.

<sup>174</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 66.11 and 77.10.

<sup>175</sup> For a general discussion, see Cracco Ruggini (2014). More recently Brown (2015).

<sup>176</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 58.7.

<sup>177</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 130.14.

<sup>178</sup> *Carmen contra paganos*, 112–14: ‘ludorum turpis genetrix Venerisque magistra’. See Cameron (2011) 296–8 on the identity of Symmachus.

<sup>179</sup> See, for a recent discussion, Mulryan (2011).

<sup>180</sup> See Brown (2012) 83–90; also Cracco Ruggini (2014).

<sup>181</sup> See, for a discussion of *xenodochia* and hospitals in Rome, Santangeli Valenzani (1996–7); see also, for a general discussion, Hordern (2005).

<sup>182</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77.11.

And yet, in spite of these changes, the patronage of Christian buildings was also marked by significant continuities. This can be seen in the involvement of the powerful family of the Anicii in the southern part of the Campus Marius, more specifically in the area near the Porticus Minucia (see Map 1: 11). The Porticus, which in the early empire had been the main centre for the distribution of annonarian grain, went through dramatic transformations between the late fourth and early fifth century. It was affected by the flood of the Tiber in 398, and damaged by an earthquake a few years later.<sup>183</sup> The complex was restored by the urban prefect Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus in the early 400s, as recorded in an inscription copied in the fifteenth century from a damaged marble architrave (now lost) found in the area: 'Hail our lords, eternal emperors Honorius and Theodosius [II] Augusti. Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, of *clarissimus* rank, urban prefect, restored [-----?] from destruction in a fatal accident, to the condition of its original use.'<sup>184</sup> Although the name of the structure restored is lost, the area where the inscription was discovered and the fact that it refers to a building with a feminine noun (described as *fatali casu subversam*) makes its identification as the Porticus Minucia certain.<sup>185</sup> The claim made by Faustus, of having restored the complex to the condition of its original use, indicates that it was still used for some form of assistance to the citizens, perhaps even for the distribution of bread through the *annona*, in a *gradus*.

The continuity of use of the Porticus gains greater significance in light of another inscription found in this same area. This inscription, a Greek epigram carved into a badly damaged marble slab, generated a great polemic concerning its reconstruction and meaning (never fully resolved), but the discussion raised important issues.<sup>186</sup> The fragmented text celebrates a certain Faustus *xenodochos*, the founder of a *xenodochium*; early medieval sources refer to a *xenodochium Aniciorum* located in this same area, and it is clear that these referred to the same institution and founder as our inscription—a member of the family of the Anicii whose name was Faustus.<sup>187</sup> The most likely candidates, in the fifth century, would be Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, restorer of the Porticus, and Anicius Acilius Aginantius Faustus *iunior* (probably his son), who occupied the urban prefecture

<sup>183</sup> The flood is mentioned by Claudian, *De bello Gild.* 41–3; Manacorda (2001) 42 and 47, for the existence of alluvial material in the area and evidence of earthquake.

<sup>184</sup> *CIL* VI, 1676 = *EDR* 111460: '[Salvis] d(ominis) n(ostris) aeternis principibus Honori[o et Theodosio Augg(usti)], / Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus v(ir) c(larissimus), praef(ectus) urb[i ---] / fatali casu subversam in formam prisci usus [restituit ---] / -----'. The restoration took place during Faustus' first prefecture, sometime between 408 and 423: see *PLRE* II, Faustus 8.

<sup>185</sup> As argued by Guarducci (1969–70) 228–9. See also Manacorda (1993) 32.

<sup>186</sup> See *IGUR* 69, for the inscription. The essential discussion can be found in Guarducci (1969–70) but see also Mazzarino (1974B). See Santangeli Valenzani (1996–7) 205–6 for more recent scholarship.

<sup>187</sup> A letter of Gregory the Great (*Ep.* 9.8) and the *Lib. pont.* II, 25. See, for its location, Manacorda (1993) 40–1; Santangeli Valenzani (1996–7) 205–7. The identification has been supported by recent excavations in the area: see now Ceci and Santangeli Valenzani (2016) 354–9 (for the early medieval phase).

and the consulship at the end of that century.<sup>188</sup> The latter seems, in fact, the most likely candidate, as this would leave enough time for the transformations in this area to take place, i.e. from Porticus to *xenodochium*. Different generations of the same family were therefore involved in the assistance of different groups within Roman society, monumentalizing their patronage through the restoration or foundation of two very different types of institution, one traditional and the other radically Christian. Classical and Christian forms of using space can thus be seen as part of a wider social strategy of this powerful family. This was relevant for a family of powerful political operators like the Anicii, but it was none the less so for pious Christians like Pammachius and Fabiola. As Jerome tells us, when talking about the news of their charitable foundation in Portus, 'Britain learned in the Summer what Egypt and Parthia knew in Spring'.<sup>189</sup>

The patronage of religious buildings achieved more than the aims explicitly celebrated in their dedicatory inscriptions. This was true in the case of pagan structures too. At the end of the third century, Lucius Crepereius Rogatus was celebrated with a statue: '[Statue] of Secundinus. To Lucius Crepereius Rogatus, of *clarissimus* rank, priest of the Sun god, member of the college of the seven men (*septemvir*), and splendid *lupercus*, founder of this temple'.<sup>190</sup> The dedicatory inscription does not record the name of the person or group responsible for awarding the statue, and we cannot rule out the possibility that it was Rogatus himself. He was, after all, responsible for the setting up of a statue honouring his wife, Lucia Baebia Sallustia Crescentilla, 'matron of old sanctity and most exquisite and modest wife'.<sup>191</sup> A religious foundation could thus be turned into a form of family commemoration. Similarly, the inscription set up by Tamesius Olympius Augustus commemorating his works in the Mithraeum of the Olympii mentioned the temple built by his grandfather in the past, celebrating the glory of the family.<sup>192</sup>

The most striking example of family commemoration through building is a series of inscriptions recording works at the Basilica of S. Peter, in the Vatican.<sup>193</sup> In the second half of the fourth century, the *clarissima femina* Anastasia and her husband decorated an unidentified structure in the basilica, probably the baptistery that had been recently built by bishop Damasus, celebrating the bishop as a *vir sanctus*.<sup>194</sup> It was probably her son, Gallus *Anastasiae natus*, who paid for further works in the basilica a few years later.<sup>195</sup> Another Anastasia, married to the consul

<sup>188</sup> See respectively *PLRE* II, Faustus 8 and Faustus 4.

<sup>189</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 77.10: 'Sub una aestate didicit Britannia, quod Aegyptus et Parthus agnoverant vere'.

<sup>190</sup> *CIL* VI, 1397 = *LSA* 1321: 'Secundini. / L(ucio) Crepereio / Rogato, c(larissimo) v(iro), / pontifici / dei Solis, / septemviro / et insigni / lupercus, / istarum / aedium / conditori.'

<sup>191</sup> *CIL* VI, 1398 = *LSA* 1322: 'veteris / sanctitatis / matronae et / lectissimae / pudentissi/maeq(ue) coniugi'.

<sup>192</sup> *CIL* VI, 754 = *EDR* 167157, discussed above, pp. 173–5.

<sup>193</sup> See, on these inscriptions, Silvagni (1929); also Machado (2011) 506–7.

<sup>194</sup> *CIL* VI, 41331a = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4097 = *EDR* 093568; see Brandt (2013) 85.

<sup>195</sup> *CIL* VI, 41336a = De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 148 n. 15 = *EDR* 093570.



of 423 Flavius Avitus Marinianus, paid for the decoration of the façade of the basilica at the request of bishop Leo, as we know from a copy of the mosaic inscription that recorded the work.<sup>196</sup> Later still, their son Rufius Viventius Gallus, a former urban prefect, fulfilled a vow and decorated an unnamed structure, possibly the altar or the apostle's tomb.<sup>197</sup> Four generations of the same family contributed to the aggrandizement of S. Peter's, while also celebrating their piety and social standing with inscriptions set up in different parts of the complex. It is possible that Anastasia's family was a very special one: she might have been a descendant of the Caesar Gallus, nephew of Constantine himself, a fact that would help to explain the prominence of the family in a basilica built by their famous imperial ancestor.<sup>198</sup> Their initiatives also illustrate how lay families could support bishops, stressing their connections with their spiritual leaders and thus becoming involved in ecclesiastical politics.

### Aristocrats and bishops

As bishops began to play a more active role in the expansion of the Christian network of buildings, members of the Roman elite became more important for the consolidation of their power. They did it by embellishing and funding the churches associated with episcopal policies and interests, just as Anastasia and her descendants had done in S. Peter's. Damasus built the Church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso in the area of his house, in the Campus Martius, a particularly busy part of the city.<sup>199</sup> A century later Attica, wife of the praetorian prefect of Gaul Magnus Felix (in 469) paid for unspecified works, possibly a chapel, in the bishop's church.<sup>200</sup> Around 428, the consul Flavius Constantius Felix and his wife Padusia paid for works in the Lateran Basilica, the main episcopal complex in Rome, possibly in its very apse.<sup>201</sup> The fact that Flavius Felix had been involved in the assassination of two clerics, a bishop in Arles, and a deacon in Rome shows how deep (and traumatic) was his involvement in ecclesiastical politics.<sup>202</sup>

Aristocrats living or based in Rome could also choose to pursue agendas that did not coincide with the interests of bishops. At some point between 459 and 471, the military leader and arguably the most powerful man in the West, Flavius

<sup>196</sup> *CIL* VI, 41397a = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4102 = *EDR* 093619. See, on the façade of the basilica, Liverani (2008B) 161–6.

<sup>197</sup> *CIL* VI, 41400 = *ICUR* n.s. II, 4781 = *EDR* 093622.

<sup>198</sup> Originally suggested by Silvagni (1929) 146; the suggestion was expanded and convincingly supported by Chausson (2002) 146–8.

<sup>199</sup> As pointed out by Pentiricci (2009) 65–6.

<sup>200</sup> De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 151 n. 25; see Cecchelli (2009) 282. See, on this donor, *PLRE* II, Attica.

<sup>201</sup> *CIL* VI, 41393 = De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 149 n. 17 + 307 n. 5 = *ILCV* 68 = *EDR* 093616; De Rossi records this mosaic inscription as on the apse.

<sup>202</sup> See *PLRE* II, Felix 14, for references.

Ricimer, sponsored works in the Arian church later known as S. Agata dei Goti, on the Quirinal. We know this because the apse mosaic, with its dedicatory inscription, was copied before its destruction: 'Flavius Ricimer, of illustrious rank, commander of the cavalry and infantry, patrician, former *consul ordinarius*, embellished [this] church according to his vow'.<sup>203</sup> This was a very high profile donation, by a man of incomparable standing in western society, in a building where Christians who escaped the control of Rome's Nicene bishop could meet. It was a religious choice, but also a powerful intervention in the city's religious landscape. It is not by coincidence that Gregory I, when referring to it in the late sixth century, would call it a 'cave of heretical depravity'.<sup>204</sup>

Decorating a church was not an opportunity available to most aristocratic families. It required funds, in the first place, but most importantly it required the authorization of the cleric responsible for the building—in most cases the bishop. In a highly stratified group like the Roman aristocracy, differences of fortune, standing, and personal connections constituted a real limit to the access to the most splendid forms of self-celebration. This did not stop humbler aristocrats from donating to the Church. The *Liber pontificalis* mentions objects like candelabra, crowns, chalices, and lamps, made of gold or silver, frequently decorated with precious stones.<sup>205</sup> Aristocratic donations, big and small, maintained the flow of wealth that animated the Christian community, playing an important role in the consolidation of episcopal power. Roman bishops were aware of the case of Ambrose of Milan, for example, who used the treasure (the 'sacred vessels') amassed by his church to pay for the ransom of Romans captured by Goths in the Balkans after 378.<sup>206</sup> It was from the episcopate of his Roman contemporary Damasus onwards (at least) that the names of donors began to be publicly read in the church.<sup>207</sup> Members of the Roman elite, whether high or low, could thus have their generosity celebrated in texts, inscriptions, and public readings, probably drawing considerable prestige from such public celebrations.

### Aristocratic donors and parish churches

It was the foundation of *tituli* that allowed the wealthiest aristocrats to intervene in Rome's religious topography in the most spectacular way. As Federico Guidobaldi observed, eighteen out of the nineteen titular churches archaeologically attested to

<sup>203</sup> De Rossi, *ICUR* II, 438 n. 127 = *ILCV* 1637: 'Fl(avius) Ricimer, v(ir) i(n)lustris, magister utriusque militiae, / patricius et ex cons(ule) ord(inario), pro voto suo adornavit'. See Orlandi (2006) on the inscription.

<sup>204</sup> Greg. I., *Ep.* 4.19: 'spelunca pravitatis haereticae'.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, the list of objects presented by Sixtus III to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (*Lib. pont.* I, 232–3) and by Hilarius to different churches in Rome (*Lib. pont.* I, 242–5).

<sup>206</sup> Amb., *De offic.* 2.28.136; see Brown (2012) 128–9.

<sup>207</sup> A practice mentioned in Jerome, *In Jerem.* 11.15 (*PL* 24.755); Jerome, *In Ezech.* 18.5 (*PL* 25.175); Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.* 46.6; Innocent, *Ep. Dec. Gub.* (*Ep.* 25) 2. See Brown (2012) 39–42 and Pietri (1976) 580, for the evolution of this practice.

in the late fifth century for which we have evidence (out of a total of twenty-nine known) were built reusing or adapting private properties, either *domus* or *insulae*.<sup>208</sup> These were probably the property of wealthy Romans, who donated them for religious use.<sup>209</sup> Properties donated by aristocrats were also important as a source of revenue for the churches founded in late antique Rome: the *Liber pontificalis* records a number of urban and rural properties that made up an important part of the endowment of different churches in the city, confirming the close link between senatorial donations and ecclesiastical wealth.<sup>210</sup> Scholars have discussed the degree to which members of the elite were in control of their foundations and endowments, and what kind of influence they had over the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Whereas no one would question the episcopal character of the larger basilicas founded by emperors and bishops, there is no consensus over the standing of titular churches, described as *tituli* in our documents. According to Charles Pietri, for example, the word *titulus* referred to the legal rights kept by a donor over his foundation (or donation), which would imply a great degree of aristocratic control over these churches.<sup>211</sup> However, Julia Hillner observed that there is no evidence for actual aristocratic control over *tituli*, and it is more likely that each donation meant that ownership passed fully into the hands of bishops, who kept a strict economic and liturgical control over it.<sup>212</sup> It is probable, furthermore, that the definition of *titulus* changed over time, possibly towards an increased episcopal control over these foundations.<sup>213</sup>

Whether aristocrats retained any legal right over their donations or not, the fact remained that such spectacular actions greatly enhanced their standing among their fellow worshippers as well as their influence before ecclesiastical circles. This is brought to light by the foundation of a *titulus* on the Quirinal Hill by the *inlustris femina* Vestina during the episcopate of Innocentius I (401–17). Vestina funded the construction of the basilica and had it dedicated to the Saints Gervasius and Protasius.<sup>214</sup> The saints had been recently discovered in Milan, by none other than bishop Ambrose, in a publicity stunt that had great political and religious impact, and Vestina's donation effectively introduced them to Rome.<sup>215</sup> Among the many precious objects and estates presented for the endowment of the church, the *Liber pontificalis* lists all the urban properties left in her will.<sup>216</sup> These included a *domus* near the Basilica Libiana (sic: possibly the Macellum Liviae, on the

<sup>208</sup> Guidobaldi (1989) 386–91. The subscription list appended to the acts of the Roman synod of 499 records twenty-nine churches, but there is no evidence for ten of them. See T. Mommsen (ed.), *MGH. AA* 12, 410–15.

<sup>209</sup> Also argued by Pietri (1981) 443–4.

<sup>210</sup> As shown by Pietri (1978). See also Dubouloz (2011) 583–8 for a list of fourth-century donations.

<sup>211</sup> Pietri (1978) 328 and (1966). The same perspective was adopted by Llewellyn (1976).

<sup>212</sup> See Hillner (2007). <sup>213</sup> See discussion in Guidobaldi (1989) and (2000A).

<sup>214</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 200.

<sup>215</sup> See McLynn (1994) 211–15 on the discovery and its impact. Carlà (2010) 212–17 explores the political aspects of this foundation, but downplays Vestina's role.

<sup>216</sup> These donations are discussed in great detail by Palmer (1974) 146–56.

Esquiline); a bath near the Templum Mamuri (probably on the Vicus or Clivus Mamurii);<sup>217</sup> a *domus* with baths on the Clivus Salutis; a *domus* on the Clivus Mamuri, close to the basilica; a *domus* on the Vicus Patricius; a *domus* close to the basilica, on the Vicus Longus; a *domus* Floriana; a bakery (*pistrinum*) on the Vicus Longus, called Castoriani; baths on the same street; and, finally, part of the revenues of customs collected at the Porta Nomentana.<sup>218</sup> Important houses, baths, a bakery, and even the right to collect customs passed into the hands of this church; more importantly, all of them were in the same neighbourhood, between the Quirinal and the Esquiline, situated between the Alta Semita and the Clivus Patricius. In other words, roughly between modern-day Via del Quirinale and Via Cavour, distant approximately 900 m from each other. It was not just buildings and ornaments that Vestina passed into the hands of the bishop, but actual social and economic power over a specific part of the city and its population. Vestina's donation was certainly exceptional (or exceptionally well documented), but it was not unique. A few decades later, bishop Sixtus endowed the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore with the property of Palmatus, located next to the church, with a bath and a bakery that brought it a revenue of more than 154 solidi (the largest recorded in the *Liber pontificalis*).<sup>219</sup>

### Patrons of saints

In the same period when Vestina introduced the cult of Gervasius and Protasius in Rome, another aristocrat, Pammachius, founded a *titulus* on top of a *domus* that was believed to house relics of martyrs, as we saw above—the later Basilica of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.<sup>220</sup> A few decades later, when Demetrias, a member of the powerful Anician family, commissioned the building of a church in her property on the Via Latina, she had it dedicated to the saint Stephen, whose relics had been recently discovered in the Holy Land, and whose arrival in Africa was witnessed by her.<sup>221</sup> The inscription celebrating the foundation read:

When the virgin Amnia Demetrias leaving this world brought to a close her last day (yet not truly dying) she gave to you, pope Leo, these final vows, that this sacred house arise. The trust of her command is fulfilled, yet it is more glorious to fulfil a vow of another than one's own. Stephen, who first in the world was carried away by savage death, and reigns in the height of heaven, illuminates the summit [of the work]. By order of the bishop, the presbyter Tigrinus oversaw it, honourable in mind, work, and faith.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>217</sup> See Coarelli (2014) 121–2.

<sup>218</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 221–2.

<sup>219</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 233 records 154 *solidi* and 3 *siliquae*; see Guidobaldi (1995B) for the property.

<sup>220</sup> See references on pp. 181–2.

<sup>221</sup> See Machado (2011) 503–5; also Kurdock (2007).

<sup>222</sup> *ICUR* n.s. VI, 15764 (better than *ILCV* 1765): 'Cum mundum li[nqu]ens Dem[etri]as Amn[ia] virgo / cla[ud]eret extremum non morit[ura] diem.] / [hae]c tibi, pap[a] L[eo], votorum extrem[a]

The inscription left no doubt about the importance of bishop Leo in the construction and dedication of the church. It was erected by his order, under the supervision of a member of his clergy. And yet, this was done through Demetria's vow, in honour of a saint that she had met in Africa and that had not been commemorated in Rome until then. Towards the end of the same century, another church was erected in commemoration of a martyr that had not been worshipped at Rome, the apostle Andrew. The Church of S. Andrea in Catabarbara, now gone, was erected on the Esquiline Hill by pope Simplicius, through a donation from the powerful general Flavius Valila. We are informed about this through an inscription that ran along the apse, beneath the mosaic:

To you, Christ, this property was vowed by Valila's wish, to you the testator himself transferred his property, and pope Simplicius by adapting it for the heavenly rites caused it in truth to be in your service, combining it with the name of Andrew, apostolic martyr, for whom we had not a threshold [i.e. a church]. The church (now) as heir employs it with rightful titles, introducing the holy rites where before stood a house. Devout people, approach and learn from this exchange to crave the heavenly realms in return for earthly possessions.<sup>223</sup>

As the dedicatory inscription informs us, this was a house, donated by Valila and adapted by bishop Simplicius (468–83) for the worship of Andrew—following a vow made by the donor.<sup>224</sup> Valila was a powerful general, a contemporary (and possibly opponent) of the *magister utriusque militiae* Ricimer who decorated (or built) the Arian Church of S. Agata. He was an important patron of Rome's catholic bishop, and had his name carved into the seating of the Colosseum, as a statement of his participation in the city political and festive life.<sup>225</sup> It was this outstanding position of power that enabled him to make such a powerful contribution to the religious life of his fellow Christians, leaving his name recorded on the apse of the church.

The foundations of Vestina, Pammachius, Demetrias, and Valila were exceptional interventions in Rome's religious life, creating new spaces for Christian

suorum] / [trad]idit, ut s[a]crae surgeret aula d[omus]. / M[a]ndati comple[t]a fides, sed glor[ia maior] / [al]terius votum [s]olvere quam propr[ium.] / In[lus]trat culmen Steph[an]us qui primus in or[be] / [r]aptus mort[e] t[ri]ci regn[a]t in arc[e] poli.] / [Pr]aesulis ha[ec] nutu Tigrinus pr[es]byter instans] / excolit ins[ig]nis mente labor[e] fide[.]'

<sup>223</sup> CIL VI, 41402 = ILCV 1785 = EDR 093625: 'Haec tibi mens Valilae devovit praedia, Christe, / cui testator opes detulit ipse suas, / Simpliciusq(ue) papa sacris caelestibus aptans / effecit vere muneris esse tui / et quod apostolici deessent limina nobis // martiris, Andreae nomine composuit. / Utitur haec heres tituli ecclesia iustis / succedensq(ue) domo mystica iura locat. / Plebs devota, veni perq(ue) haec commercia disce / terreno censu regna superna peti.'

<sup>224</sup> We will discuss this building in greater detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>225</sup> On Valila and his standing: Roberto (2013). For the inscription in the Colosseum, see Orlandi (2004) 513–16.

worship while demonstrating public support for the bishop. They also had an impact in the way Romans conceived the other world, promoting the cult of martyrs and their relics, adding to the (by then) impressive collection of saints that populated the imagination of Roman Christians. It is the exceptionality of these initiatives that make them so important for our understanding of the role played by aristocrats in the religious life of late antique Rome: they indicate how far powerful women and men were able to go.

## Conclusion

The period that extended from the end of the third until the beginning of the sixth century was marked by important changes in the religious life of the city. The establishment of Christianity and the decline of paganism were important processes, that shaped to a very large extent the way we see the religious history of late antique Rome. They changed the identity and appearance of the city, transforming its religious topography through the development of new spaces of worship and the abandonment of the old ones. They redefined the ways in which Roman aristocrats interacted with the gods and the sources of religious authority in the city. And yet, as we saw above, members of the Roman elite were able to explore the different possibilities offered by these changes to retain their influence and social standing before the inhabitants of the *Urbs*. Although their official and direct engagement with religious issues declined in the course of the fourth century, as the traditional priesthoods lost their influence and civic magistracies were disconnected from religious rituals, aristocrats were able to expand their personal involvement in the lives of different religious groups, Christians and pagans.

At the same time, by acting as builders of religious structures, senators and members of their families were able to do more than just add to the city's physical fabric. They established themselves as personal patrons of different religious groups; they promoted the cause of their own personal beliefs and religious networks; they advertised their own (and their families') standing and piety to members of a wider community; and finally, they contributed to the very definition of Rome's rich and complex religious life, introducing saints and relics into the city-space. Perhaps more importantly, they were able to do it as imperial officials and, in a much larger scale, as private worshippers.

But the strategies adopted by aristocrats for securing their social and political standing in the *Urbs* were also the basis for a process that would change the city, and their position in it, forever. Over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, Roman aristocrats played a central part in the slow but progressive consolidation of Christian bishops as the leading authority in the city. By donating money and properties, supporting episcopal authority and orthodoxy, building churches and

*xenodochia*, sponsoring the cult of new saints and embellishing episcopal basilicas and older churches, aristocrats contributed to the historical development of a new type of society. As spectacular and prestigious as these donations might have been, they were made at the expense of their social and political capital. It is to the physical and spatial basis of aristocratic power, their *domus*, that we must now turn, if we want to understand how this process actually took place.





PART 3

DOMESTIC SPACES AND THE  
PRIVATIZATION OF POWER



## Senatorial Houses as Centres of Power

On 25 December 438, the Senate met under the authority of the praetorian prefect and consul, Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus. Important senators like the urban prefect Flavius Paulus and the *vicarius urbis* Iunius Pomponius Publicanus attended the meeting. During this session, the legal code brought by Faustus from Constantinople, compiled under the orders of the emperor Theodosius II, was promulgated.<sup>1</sup> This was a solemn and official occasion, whose proceedings were published by the notary of the Senate, Flavius Laurentius.<sup>2</sup> The most august and traditional political institution of ancient Rome was assembled before the eyes of the empire's most prestigious magistrate, the man after whom that year had been named, to witness the restoration of legal order and the confirmation of the emperor's sacred rule over the Roman world. And yet, the senatorial assembly took place in a domestic space, the house of Faustus, '*quae est ad Palmam*', a location that remains impossible to identify.<sup>3</sup>

Faustus was a very powerful senator, a man whom we have already met in previous chapters. He had reached the peak of a successful political career, occupying the positions of consul and praetorian prefect (in 438), after having been urban prefect on three different occasions. He was a member of the powerful family of the Anicii, and was honoured by the citizens and the *ordo* of Aricia with a statue, as a sign of gratitude for his benefactions to that community.<sup>4</sup> He had been responsible for important works in different parts of the city, embellishing the forum built by his father in the Campus Martius and restoring the Porticus Minucia. The setting of this particular senatorial meeting in his house illustrates the crucial role played by domestic spaces in late antique Rome. It indicates, furthermore, the wide range of possibilities offered by houses as political spaces.

Such a combination of houses and politics might strike us as unusual. It is contrary to the modern assumption that cities should have their administrative and political centres in clearly defined and public spaces. This is all the more striking because, as we saw in Chapter 3, the Roman Forum was still a prestigious

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta senatus* 1. The meeting is discussed in Harries (1999) 65–6 and Matthews (2000) 31–54. See more recently Dove (2013).

<sup>2</sup> 'Exceptor amplissimi senatus' (*Gesta senatus* 8). The copy of his signature is preserved in one manuscript only.

<sup>3</sup> See the general considerations in Guidobaldi (1995C), and Matthews (2000) 32–3; see also, for the location, Marchetti-Longhi (1949–1951).

<sup>4</sup> *CIL* XIV, 2165 = *LSA* 324. On Faustus and his family, see *PLRE* II, Faustus 8.

space in the first decades of the fifth century, and the Curia had recently been the subject of a series of restoration works. The increasing role played by aristocratic houses in political life, however, is a distinctive feature of the city in late antiquity, a process that might be seen as culminating with the promulgation of the code at the house of Faustus. We can only have a proper understanding of the 'city of Rome'—not only in its socio-political sense, as a community of citizens, but also as an urban phenomenon—if we acknowledge the fact that the late antique aristocratic *domus* was an important point of reference in the city's political topography.

Ever since the beginning of the history of the city, Roman houses were social and political centres, used for a much wider spectrum of activities than we usually associate with domestic spaces today.<sup>5</sup> Romans were aware of the political importance of their dwellings, and of the ways in which houses could help advance a political career. Buying or renting a suitably magnificent *domus* was a natural step for any young politician, as Cicero observed.<sup>6</sup> The *domus* served not only as residence for the aristocrat and his family, but was also the physical base for his household, an expression of his identity and power, and an appropriate arena for political interaction. It was a 'power house', an engine that made effective the economic resources, social status, and political connections of its owner.<sup>7</sup>

If houses were political centres, it is still necessary to understand the ways in which senators used domestic spaces to exercise, advertise, and increase their political power in late antique Rome. As discussed in Chapter 5, houses played a crucial role in the religious life of the city, bringing worshippers of different cults under the influence of their patrons. Houses were, after all, where their owners spent a large part of their days, and were of central importance not only for them and their household, but also for their friends, clients (actual and potential), and different types of visitors. Houses did not isolate their owners from public life. They were frequently incorporated into the very public celebrations of aristocrats' social and political standing, be it as part of celebratory processions or as setting for honorific monuments, as we saw in Chapter 4. As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill observed, '[a] public figure went home not so much to shield himself from the public gaze as to present himself to it in the best light'.<sup>8</sup>

There was, of course, a notion that the area of a house was of a different nature from that of streets and squares.<sup>9</sup> This is not the occasion to try to define a theory of public and private domains in ancient or late antique Rome,<sup>10</sup> but it must be

<sup>5</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill (1994), which, although not directly concerned with Rome, offers numerous and valuable insights into Roman housing. For Rome, see Wiseman (1987) and Eck (1997B). For late antiquity, see Bowes (2010).

<sup>6</sup> Cicero, *Cael.* 7.18.

<sup>7</sup> See Girouard (1978) 3 for the expression.

<sup>8</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 5. These topics are discussed in Tuori and Nissin (2015).

<sup>9</sup> As Fronto, *Ep. Var.* 5.1–2 pointed out; see, for a useful discussion, Russell (2016) 25–30.

<sup>10</sup> See discussion in Zaccaria-Ruggiu (1995) and, especially for property rights, Dubouloz (2011).

remembered that houses offered a privileged space for the articulation of the public sphere with private interests, under the control of their owners.<sup>11</sup> Public and private powers were articulated in ways that are different from our own, and the balance between these two spheres was different according to different types of space. As Vitruvius noted, the articulation of these elements varied according to the social status of the person who owned the house.<sup>12</sup> Power, both public and private, was therefore an important element in the definition of the late Roman aristocratic *domus* as a social as well as an architectural unit, and it is reasonable to say that we cannot understand the senatorial appropriation of urban space fully if we do not discuss the role played by domestic spaces in this process.

### Houses and the Representation of Power

There was an important symbolic dimension to Roman houses. The word *domus* referred not only to the physical building, but also to the social unit that lived, worked, and frequented it. During the early empire, *domus* replaced *familia* as an index of social respectability: to praise one's house was also a form of personal praise.<sup>13</sup> There was also a religious dimension to it. Symmachus affirmed that a visit to his house on the Caelian was also a visit to his *lares*, and, since the Late Republic, domestic architecture had begun to adopt architectural elements that had previously only been seen in religious buildings.<sup>14</sup> What is more important to us here is the socio-political meaning of a house, and the extent to which it was clear to ancient Romans. This can be seen in moments of crisis, when domestic spaces were involved in some of the tumultuous events that characterized life in fourth-century Rome.

When narrating the political history of the *Urbs* in the second half of the fourth century, Ammianus recorded two cases that illustrate the relationship between houses and personal power. In the first of them, the people of Rome attacked the house of Caius Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, who was urban prefect in 365 (immediately after the elder Symmachus). We are told that his house, near the Baths of Constantine, was attacked and almost set on fire by the lowly populace (*plebs infima*), who had revolted against his abuses. Volusianus' house would probably have been destroyed—or very badly damaged—‘... if his neighbours and family members had not rushed quickly and, by throwing stones and tiles from the

<sup>11</sup> As observed with relation to the medieval world by Duby (1988) 3–8. As Thébert pointed out, the definition of private life and its spaces is a product of social relations: Thébert (1987) 320.

<sup>12</sup> Vitruvius, *De Arch.* 6.5.1.

<sup>13</sup> Saller (1984) 348.

<sup>14</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 7.19. See also Saller (1984) 350 and, for architectural aspects, Coarelli (1996B).

top of the roofs, driven the attackers away'.<sup>15</sup> As we saw in Chapter 1, the late antique period was marked by a reinvigorated assertion of aristocratic power over the neighbourhoods where these powerful women and men lived. This had been a mark of Republican city-life, and early emperors had tried to control it by affirming their authority over the *vici* of Rome.<sup>16</sup> Ammianus' narrative shows that these local, spatial associations were still important in late antique Rome—especially at times of open conflict.

A few years later, Lucius Aurelius Avianius Symmachus saw his beautiful house in Trastevere set on fire by a crowd of 'ungrateful' Roman citizens who accused him of refusing to sell wine at the usual price.<sup>17</sup> We know from a letter written by his son, the future prefect Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, that after these events the former urban prefect left the city for the countryside, and that he only returned after successive senatorial vows and an embassy. On his return he gave a speech of thanks in the Senate house, acknowledging the support of his peers.<sup>18</sup> The *populus's* reaction to rumours about Symmachus' interest in speculating with the price of wine involved the burning of his house, and this had extreme political repercussions, mobilizing the Senate itself. The destruction of Symmachus' property did not represent a major setback to the senator's economic fortune: he owned other houses in the city (and away), and his family retained its dominating position in city life. This was, instead, an attack on his public image, and this is what explains the senatorial reaction.<sup>19</sup>

Attacks on houses of aristocrats in moments of crisis were not something new. Plutarch noted that the houses of Caesar's enemies were burned after his murder, and Cicero's house on the Palatine was destroyed at the time of his exile from Rome. Cicero himself had mentioned the great political calculation that led him to choose that particular house, as well as the high price he paid for it.<sup>20</sup> The demolition of his residence and the building of the Temple of Libertas by Clodius on its site meant a double attack against his political status: not only did he lose his dwelling and personal monument, but the dedication of the temple gave a specific meaning to his defeat (even if temporary). Although it might be said that the case involving Cicero's house on the Palatine was the product of a carefully meditated series of actions, the more 'spontaneous' attacks against the houses of the enemies of Caesar, as well as those of late antique urban

<sup>15</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.8: '... ni vicinorum et familiarum veloci concursu a summis tectorum culminibus petita saxis et tegulis abscessisset'. On Ammianus' characterization of Volusianus and the political context of these events, see Lizzi Testa (2004) 61–75.

<sup>16</sup> See p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.3–4.

<sup>18</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 1.44 (to Praetextatus).

<sup>19</sup> Amm. Marc. 19.10.1–3 mentions an attack by an angry mob against the prefect Tertullus, in 359. The fact that Tertullus had to present his children in order to appease his attackers suggests that this too was an attack on his house.

<sup>20</sup> On Caesar: Plut., *Caesar* 68.1. On the house of Cicero see Papi (1995); on the events surrounding its demolition, Hales (2003) 43.

prefects, confirm that the identification between an aristocrat and his house was widely acknowledged.

The late fourth-century biographies of the *Historia Augusta* give us a few examples of how the identity of an owner could become associated in a lasting way with his house.<sup>21</sup> In the life of the emperor Pescennius Niger (late second century) we are told that his house still existed, carrying his name, at the otherwise unknown Campus Iovis. It is also mentioned that the family of the third-century emperor Balbinus still owned his house on the Carinae, and the same is said of the house of the Tetrici (who attempted usurpation in the 270s) on the Caelian Hill.<sup>22</sup> The relationship between a *domus* and its occupants was important, and one could add to the prestige of the other. The Gordian family, for example, is said to have owned Pompey's famous *domus rostrata*, and Gordian III was praised for embellishing it.<sup>23</sup> The fact that the veracity of these stories cannot be verified does not make them any less relevant. They are more illustrative of late senatorial conceptions than of the realities of third-century Rome's real estate market. But it is nevertheless significant that the status of an owner could enhance that of his house, and vice versa.<sup>24</sup> Owning and living in a *domus* was enough to create an identity between the building and its owner, turning it into a personal monument inscribed in the cityscape.

The association between aristocratic houses and their owners went back a long way. There was an intimate relationship between the Republican aristocrat Gnaeus Octavius' magnificent house on the Palatine and his political prestige—an association that led to his election to the consulship in 165 BC, according to Cicero.<sup>25</sup> This association was still relevant in late antiquity: a law addressed by Honorius and Arcadius to the urban prefect of Constantinople in 396 established that only those who owned a house in the city were entitled to the *annona*, because owning a house was considered a demonstration of affection for the city.<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, Theoderic, in the early sixth century, praised the patrician Symmachus for the beauty of his private buildings, and asked him to restore the Theatre of Pompey, as if the beauty of his houses qualified him for public munificence.<sup>27</sup> A *domus* could identify its owner as a member of the political community, while at the same time distinguishing his social and political standing before his peers and inferiors.

<sup>21</sup> See, for what follows, Machado (2012B).

<sup>22</sup> Respectively: *SHA, Pesc. Nig.* 12.4; *Max et Balb.* 16.1; *Tir. Tryg.* 25.4.

<sup>23</sup> *Gord.* 2.3 and 32.1; see also Guilhembet (1992), on the house of Pompey and political propaganda.

<sup>24</sup> See, for an earlier period, Pliny, *Ep.* 7.24.8–9, referring to the house where C. Cassius Longinus (jurist and suffect consul in AD 30) lived and taught, bought by his friend Quadratus, who restored it to its former grandeur, fame, and glory.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero, *Off.* 1.138.

<sup>26</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.13: 'Neque enim fas est, ut qui urbis adfectum domus monstrare neglexerint, eius commodis perfruantur'.

<sup>27</sup> Cass., *Var.* 5.51.1–2; see p. 62 for this letter.

## Houses and the Rhetoric of Power

As Vitruvius observed, a house should suit the status and occupation of its owner. The houses of moneylenders or tax collectors should be architecturally different from those of lawyers and orators, just as their activities were. He continues:

For persons of high rank who hold office and magistracies, and whose duty it is to serve the state, we must provide princely vestibules, lofty halls and very spacious peristyles, plantations and broad avenues finished in a majestic manner; further, libraries and basilicas arranged in a similar fashion with the magnificence of public structures, because, in such palaces, public deliberations and private trials and judgments are often transacted.<sup>28</sup>

Vitruvius' comments are usually taken as a suggestion that the house was a reflection of the owner's social and cultural identity: the grander the house, the grander the owner.<sup>29</sup> Houses were more than symbols of social standing and nobility, however. They were also a claim to greater social and political power, expressing their owner's ambitions. Sallust contrasted the late Republic with the preceding age, advising those who admired houses and villas, built on the scale of cities, to pay a visit to the temples built and adorned with piety by their ancestors.<sup>30</sup> Members of the Roman elite, moved by an intensely competitive spirit, spent vast sums of money on domestic buildings, sums that had never been imagined before. The elder Pliny described the process by which within a few generations (between the late Republic and early empire) the houses built by Roman aristocrats set ever higher standards in terms of spending on decoration and building.<sup>31</sup> Tacitus explained the reason for this behaviour, saying that 'reputation and following hung on a man's opulence, housing and trappings'.<sup>32</sup> The amount of resources spent on building and decoration was not just what sociologists today define as 'conspicuous consumption', the spending of excessive sums as a form of social differentiation, but had a very concrete productive dimension to it as well—they were investments.<sup>33</sup>

The decoration and the concern with the appearance of private dwellings are a constant concern in Quintus Aurelius Symmachus' personal correspondence. Rather than an exercise in futility, the discussion of these topics offers an important insight into the ideological positions and social strategies of wealthy aristocrats. When he praised a friend for the new style of mosaic this friend had invented, commenting that he would try to adapt it for the vaults of his own

<sup>28</sup> *De Arch.* 6.5.2 (transl. Granger).

<sup>29</sup> See Nevett (1997) and Hales (2003) 26–8.

<sup>30</sup> Sallust, *Cat.* 12.3–4: 'in urbium modum exaedificatas'.

<sup>31</sup> Pliny, *HN* 36.109–12.

<sup>32</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.55.3.

<sup>33</sup> The limits of the excessive use of the concept of 'conspicuous consumption' for the understanding of spending on Roman houses were well argued by Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 6.



house, Symmachus demonstrated his interest in originality and innovation in decoration.<sup>34</sup> A rich mosaic was an item that distinguished an aristocratic house, but its originality gave it personality. This subject is also present in Symmachus' correspondence with his son-in-law, Nicomachus Flavianus: in one letter, he praised Flavianus for the quality of works done in one of his properties (the location is not certain), expressing his disagreement only with the choice made for the decoration of the baths—painting, instead of mosaic, which he would have preferred.<sup>35</sup> On another occasion, the good taste and richness of material employed by Flavianus in works on his house led Symmachus to compare him to the Republican senator Lucullus, who was himself renowned for his expensive and refined taste in decoration.<sup>36</sup>

Symmachus mentioned his direct involvement with decoration and building works on two occasions. When in charge of the restoration of his father's house in Rome, Symmachus sent him a letter describing the work he was doing, his choices of marble for the pavement and revetment, the columns of Bithynian marble, and the quality of the work done on the pavement, which although made of many pieces, was so carefully polished that it looked as if made of only one piece.<sup>37</sup> On another occasion, when renovating a house he had recently bought, he observed that structural works were needed, '... because the previous owner had prioritized capacity of reception over the solidity of the building, as well as quickness in construction over safety'.<sup>38</sup> Symmachus' criticism of the previous owner's emphasis on building a space to receive people illustrates in a very concrete way the connection between domestic structures and political function, a connection that was already centuries old in late antique Rome.<sup>39</sup> This helps us to understand Jerome's criticism of Romans who used gold for the revetment of walls and capitals, rather than giving it to the church, concluding that '... naked and hungry Christ dies in the form of his poor in front of our doors'.<sup>40</sup> In opposition to this traditional model of investment, Jerome proposed a different one. Instead of spending huge sums of money on the decoration of a house, the owner was expected to donate it to the Church.<sup>41</sup> In practical terms, both strategies were concerned with expanding the social capital of the aristocracy.

The enormous sums spent by aristocrats on the decoration of their houses were not criticized by Christians alone. Already in the early empire writers had made it

<sup>34</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 8.42.2. <sup>35</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 6.49.1.

<sup>36</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 6.70. It is unlikely that Symmachus was using this comparison in the same way as Cicero (*Off.* 1.140), as a means of criticizing his good friend Flavianus.

<sup>37</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 1.12: '... superiora conclavia crustis teguntur ea operas levitate, ut conpago solidum mentiatur'.

<sup>38</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 6.70: '... quia frequentationem soliditati conditor primus antetulit et antiquiori ei visa est celeritas utendi quam securitas succedentium'.

<sup>39</sup> See La Rocca (1986).

<sup>40</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 128.5: '... nudus atque esuriens ante fores nostras in paupere Christus moritur'.

<sup>41</sup> See, on Jerome and his social ideas, Brown (2012) 265–70.

clear that not everyone saw the competitive behaviour of the elite in a positive way. Seneca the elder lambasted in particular those who tried to copy nature, as revealing their un-natural character themselves.<sup>42</sup> The imitation of nature was a theme that was dear to Roman imperial art and culture, while at the same time it attracted the criticism of writers such as Seneca and especially Pliny.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, this is precisely one of the wonders praised by Rutilius Namatianus, when he spoke of the woods and singing birds present in the panels that decorated these palaces: '[w]hy speak of woods enclosed amid thy panelled palaces, where native birds sport with varied song?'<sup>44</sup> Artistic emulation of the world was not just a product of aesthetic taste, but also a very ambitious claim. When Olympiodorus remarked, after visiting Rome in the fifth century, that aristocratic houses were like towns, with their *fora*, temples, and baths, he was referring to the size and opulence of these residences, but also to the wealth and ambitions of their owners.<sup>45</sup> Referring to an earlier period, Pliny the Elder mentions two houses that extended over the city during his lifetime, one belonging to Gaius, the other to Nero.<sup>46</sup> Incorporating the city into the house was, according to the Flavian encyclopaedist, a product of these emperors' uncontrolled ambitions, but this passage also shows us that literary *topos* and social and political ambitions could be connected.

### Domestic splendour

There was a close relationship between descriptions of *domus* and the ways in which guests and visitors perceived them. Descriptions were influenced by literary traditions, but also by what their authors could see when entering a senatorial house. Architecture and decoration worked together to make a grandiloquent impression.<sup>47</sup> In order to achieve such an effect, large reception halls attracted a great part of the attention of their owners (and huge resources too). They are usually the most visible element in the archaeological record of houses, and their distinctive *opus vittatum* masonry (alternating layers of bricks and small tufa blocks) attest to the widespread adoption of these structures in the architecture of late antique houses.<sup>48</sup> These were spaces that combined the characteristics of 'grand' and 'public', being open to clients as well as to more prestigious visitors.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Controv.* 2.1.13. On this attitude, see Elsner (1995) 53.

<sup>43</sup> See the interesting remarks of Carey (2003) 102–37.

<sup>44</sup> Rut. Nam., *De red. suo* 1.111–12 (transl. Duff).

<sup>45</sup> Frag. 41.1 (transl. Blockley). See Purcell (1987A) 198–9 for the traditionalism and cultural context of this remark.

<sup>46</sup> Pliny, *HN* 36.111.

<sup>47</sup> A point noted by Ellis (1991). On issues of decoration and its perception, see Barry (2013).

<sup>48</sup> Guidobaldi (2000B) 134.

<sup>49</sup> See comments in Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 38.

Great reception halls were an extremely important element in the architecture of the late Roman *domus*. Halls were usually located near the street entrance (or easily reached from there), and were accessible from one side only, characteristics that helped to keep them relatively isolated from the rest of the house.<sup>50</sup> This helped to preserve the family's privacy, but also emphasized the public nature of these spaces. As Federico Guidobaldi observed, such rooms were architectonically different from other parts of the house, and it is worth noting such differences here: they were rectangular in shape, usually with an apse at one of the short sides and an entrance on the opposite short side. Entrance-ways tended to be large, and were very often divided by columns and pillars, whereas the long side-walls had a series of large, arched windows running along the top.<sup>51</sup>

These structures had much in common with surviving early Christian churches, precisely because many early Christian foundations were aristocratic houses adapted to a Christian function. A good example is the hall of the *domus* identified as belonging to the Severan urban prefect Fabius Cilo, on the small Aventine, now the Church of Santa Balbina (Map 2: 32).<sup>52</sup> Although the house is not well known—excavations carried out in the area revealed a confusing sequence of structures of different dates, particularly early imperial—the existence of *fistulae aquariae* with the name of the Severan urban prefect, together with a fragment of the marble plan, make its identification very likely. The fact that it was cited under the same name (*domus Cilonis*) by the Regionary Catalogues in the fourth century attests to its continued importance in later periods.<sup>53</sup> What interests us here is the apsidal hall, built in the fourth century and later converted into a church (Fig. 6.1).<sup>54</sup> Fragments of marble decoration suggest that this hall had an *opus sectile* pavement, but unfortunately it is impossible to know anything more about its decoration.<sup>55</sup> It is clear, however, that it was a grand and spacious room, convenient for the highly hierarchic interactions that characterized the social life of ambitious house-owners.

Although the evidence for the decoration of houses in Rome is not as rich as in other ancient cities like Pompeii or Herculaneum, it is possible to identify a few common elements. Apsidal rooms were richly decorated, and the use of *opus sectile* was preferred to traditional types of mosaic.<sup>56</sup> The painted walls and marble pavements that survive, frequently in fragmentary form, indicate the

<sup>50</sup> See Guidobaldi (1986) 207; see also Ellis (1991) 120. On the architectural development of apsidal halls and their diffusion, see De Albentis (2003).

<sup>51</sup> Guidobaldi (1986) 207–9. See also Hansen (1997) 113, for the importance of these halls and a comparison with Ostia.

<sup>52</sup> For the house, location, and identity, see Guidobaldi (1986) 181–2 and, of the same author, Guidobaldi (1995D). See also Lanciani, *FUR* 41.

<sup>53</sup> Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice Topografico* I, 139 (*Curiosum*) and 180 (*Notitia*). See, on the Regionary Catalogues and the memory of house-owners, Machado (2012B) 116.

<sup>54</sup> Krautheimer, *CBCR* I (1937) 92.

<sup>55</sup> Guidobaldi (1986) 182. <sup>56</sup> Guidobaldi (1986) 216.



Fig. 6.1. The Church of S. Balbina / *Domus* of Fabius Cilo on the Aventine.

Photo: author.

wealth and beauty of domestic spaces. A good example of what can be learned is the magnificent basilica that was once part of the house of Iunius Bassus. The building, which—as seen in Chapter 5—was converted into the Church of S. Andrea on the Esquiline through the generosity of Flavius Valila in the late fifth century (near today's Via Napoleone III), was completely demolished in the 1930s, but was already in decay in the fifteenth century, when the decoration was being spoliated (Map 2: 25).<sup>57</sup> There is no information about when the house left the property of the Bassi, nor about how it came into Valila's ownership, but the evidence available allows us to form a general picture of its most prestigious room. A drawing made by Giuliano da Sangallo at the time of its spoliation gives us an idea of its architecture and decoration, described by the Florentine artist as a 'wonderful thing' (*cosa meravigliosa*), and this can be complemented with what is known from the excavation of the building (Fig. 6.2).

The structure identified in the 1930s (and almost immediately demolished) was an apsidal hall with a tripartite entrance (divided by columns), accessible through a small bi-apsidal atrium (Fig. 6.3). Marks of the *opus sectile* decoration could still

<sup>57</sup> On the building and its history, see De Rossi (1871); Hülsen (1927B) is essential, together with Lugli and Ashby (1932). The evidence is conveniently collected in Guidobaldi (1986) 184–5. See also, more recently, Kalas (2013).

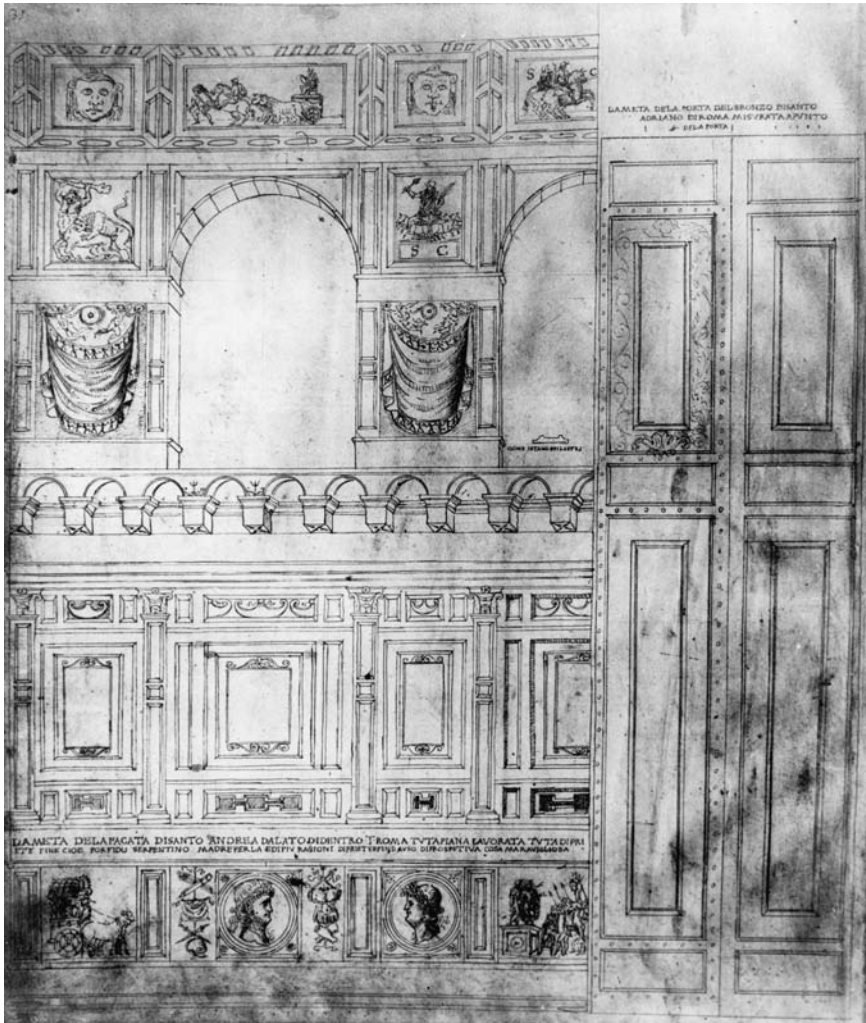


Fig. 6.2. Decoration of the Basilica of Iunius Bassus / Church of S. Andrea in Catabarbara, by Giovanni da Sangallo (Vatican Library, Codex Barberinianus fol. 31v. Cod. Vat. Lat. 13,033/Fototeca Unione neg. num. 2983, date 1955 (FU.ROMA.BASIU.11)).

Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome.

be seen on the walls at the time of the excavations, but none of the decoration survived *in situ*.<sup>58</sup> The apse had two mosaic inscriptions, one celebrating the dedication of the building by Bassus and the other recording its transformation into a church in the late fifth century. Both of them ran along the lower part of the

<sup>58</sup> Lugli and Ashby (1932) 240.

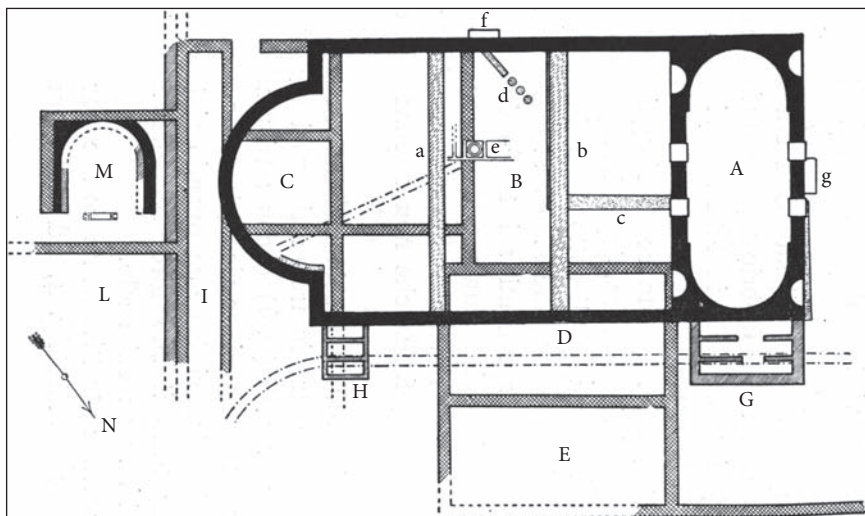


Fig. 6.3. Plan of the apsidal hall of Iunius Bassus / Church of S. Andrea in Catabarbara.

From G. Lugli and T. Ashby, 'La basilica di Giunio Basso sull'Esquilino', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 9 (1932), p. 230, with the publisher's kind permission.

apse, and were preserved during the Christian phase until the fifteenth century, when spoliation began. The apse was decorated with a mosaic, but this was replaced at the time of the foundation of the church by one showing Christ with six apostles.<sup>59</sup>

The building was dedicated by Iunius Bassus, consul in 331, as we are informed by the dedicatory inscription: 'Iunius Bassus, of *clarissimus* rank, consul, built at his own cost and dedicated for the happiness [of the times]'.<sup>60</sup> The phrasing of the inscription has a strong public character, emulating building inscriptions in Rome, and does not help, in itself, to define whether the structure was public or private. Typological similarities with other known houses, such as that built on top of the Sette Sale cistern, and the reference in the inscription recording Valila's donation to pope Simplicius and the conversion of a house into a church confirm its domestic nature.<sup>61</sup> The combination of private and public elements was enhanced by the magnificent decoration of the hall, partly preserved in Sangallo's drawing (Fig. 6.2). The original decoration of the church was already badly damaged by this time, and Sangallo used his imagination to supplement parts of

<sup>59</sup> Lugli and Ashby (1932) 226. Kalas (2013) collects the iconographic evidence.

<sup>60</sup> *CIL* VI, 1737 = *EDR* 111532: 'Iunius Bassus, v(ir) c(larissimus), consul ordinarius, propria impensa a solo fecit et dedicavit feliciter'. On Bassus, see *PLRE* I, Bassus 14. De Rossi (1871) mistakenly identified him with another Bassus, consul in 317.

<sup>61</sup> Typological similarities: Guidobaldi (1986) 185. See also Sapelli (2000).

the ensemble.<sup>62</sup> The central zone of the drawing, however, seems to be more reliable, as indicated by the marble *opus sectile* panels that survived. The decoration of the wall was divided into different sections running horizontally, each one with a distinctive pattern; a number of architectural features appear (it does not really matter, in terms of effect, if real or painted), including columns and curtains. This incorporation of architectural elements into the iconographic programme emphasized the public dimension of the whole complex, an effect that was enhanced by Bassus' dedicatory inscription.

Luckily, four beautiful *opus sectile* panels survive,<sup>63</sup> showing images of animals fighting (two panels), a mythological scene (the 'rape of Hylas'), and one image of a consul leading a *pompa circensis*, followed by competitors (Fig. 6.4). The panels were restored on two occasions (in the late 1950s and 1980s), and the analysis undertaken revealed a great variety of materials, including different types of marble (such as green serpentine) and cameo glass.<sup>64</sup> Although not many examples of this type of decoration survive in such good condition, it has already



Fig. 6.4. *Opus sectile* with *pompa circensis*, decoration of the apsidal hall of Iunius Bassus.

Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme/© 2019 Photo SCALA, Florence.

<sup>62</sup> The line of imperial images at the bottom, as well as the chariot scenes at the top, for example, are Sangallo's own creation. For an appraisal of his reconstruction, see Hülsen (1927B) 60–3 and Borsi (1985) 71. See also discussion in Whitehouse (2001) 141–2.

<sup>63</sup> Two are now in the Capitoline Museums, and two in the Museo Nazionale Romano.

<sup>64</sup> See Becatti (1967) 182–6 and Paris (1991).

been demonstrated that the themes and techniques used in this basilica were not uncommon in late antique houses, such as the *domus* outside Porta Marina in Ostia (of which an even larger part of the decoration survives).<sup>65</sup> The decoration of the basilica of Iunius Bassus immortalized his moment of political glory, the inauguration of a consulship, at the same time that it advertised elements of his culture (including its pagan aspects). It celebrates, through a different medium, the same type of achievements and political strategies commemorated in the statues of the older and the younger magistrates, discussed in Chapter 4.<sup>66</sup> It is a good example of what could be seen in the house of successful senators in late antique Rome. It confirmed, to guests and visitors, the public dimension of at least this part of the house.<sup>67</sup> It helped to emphasize, furthermore, the impression of grandeur with which its owner would have wanted to be associated, as the vast array of colours and materials shone with the light entering through the large windows situated high up on the walls, creating an ideal (also, in a sense, un-real) setting in which Iunius Bassus could present himself to his friends and followers.<sup>68</sup>

Seneca described a house ‘resplendent with marble and a ceiling gleaming with gold or decked out with colours’ as a gift from the gods,<sup>69</sup> and comparisons of houses and palaces to temples were already traditional by the late antique period.<sup>70</sup> Houses were, to a large extent, sacred buildings, and late Roman aristocrats were inheritors of such traditional conceptions. The relatives, friends, and clients that took part in the religious rituals presided over by the house-owner—or who listened to the teachings of Christian preachers favoured by their patrons—also frequented these spaces. *Domus* were, therefore, instrumental in advertising aristocratic ambitions and self-representations, and deserved the attention of those interested in presenting themselves in a particularly magnificent way. It is this concern with leaving an impression on visitors that helps us to understand Ammianus’ remarks about the behaviour of flatterers who entered the houses of Roman aristocrats, and ‘...admiring the rows of columns hanging on the lofty façade, and the walls gleaming with the remarkable colours of precious stones, raise these noble men above the ranks of mere mortals’.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See discussion in Becatti (1967) and Guidobaldi (2000C) 261.

<sup>66</sup> pp. 141–3. <sup>67</sup> See Russell (2015).

To which should be added *opus sectile* pavement: Guidobaldi (1986) 184.

<sup>69</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 4.6.2. See the observations of Barry (2004) 380, who points to the variety of uses and interpretations offered by the use of coloured marbles.

<sup>70</sup> As Lucan’s description of Cleopatra’s palace, in which great attention is paid to the decoration: Lucan, *BC* 10.110–25.

<sup>71</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.4.12: ‘...ita hi quoque columnarum constructiones, alta fronte suspensas mirando, atque parietes lapidum circumspectis coloribus nitidos, ultra mortalitatem nobiles viros extollunt’.



## Personal Power and Politics in the Domestic Sphere

Beyond the household, legally under the control of the *pater*, there were other elements of Roman society that frequented the house. As mentioned above, a house was a space where social and political interactions were constantly taking place.<sup>72</sup> The social encounters that took place in the *domus* were of a very particular type, much more personal than those for which the streets and *fora* of Rome served as scenario. This does not mean that they were necessarily less formalized or important for the workings of the broader community, but only that they must be considered in themselves, as a specific set of relationships, leading to different types of solidarity. Part of the definition of an aristocrat's power was his capacity to attract people to his house, to the space that was essentially under his control. These were clients and friends who, to put it crudely, wanted to benefit from his position and power, and who would support him in return. It is very difficult to characterize these relationships, for they could involve persons of very different social status, but the general feeling was that expressed by both Seneca and his father in the first century AD, for whom a house full of clients was a sign of success, just as empty hallways were indications of difficult times for someone with political ambitions.<sup>73</sup> It was a significant fact that when Seneca tried to avert the suspicions of the emperor Nero, he changed his behaviour and stopped receiving the usual crowds at home.<sup>74</sup> This was not just a matter of appearance, but also because clients were a very real part of an aristocrat's power-base. Just as the establishment of the Principate involved the imposition of imperial control over these social and political units, the late antique period was marked by the recovery of their importance.<sup>75</sup>

Ammianus gives us a good example of the practical advantages of having a large following, when he narrates the attack against Volusianus' house: if it were not for the help of his neighbours and members of his *familia*, who threw stones and tiles from the roof of the house, it would have been burned to the ground. A house-owner had to rely on his connections, even to protect himself against physical threats.<sup>76</sup> Ammianus also gives us a good illustration of an aristocrat's interest in building a large clientship, when he narrates, in satirical mode, the frustrating experiences of those who visited the houses of the late antique nobility. The first-time visitor would initially be greeted with enthusiasm and interest, and would then have to answer many questions about himself. 'When, encouraged by this affability, you make the same call on the following day, you will hang about unknown and unexpected, while the man who the day before urged you to call

<sup>72</sup> Hales (2003) 2; for late antiquity, see Ellis (1991).

<sup>73</sup> Seneca: *Dial.* 6.10.1; Seneca the elder: *Controv.* 2.1.1.

<sup>74</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.56.3. <sup>75</sup> See Machado (2012A).

<sup>76</sup> See Amm. Marc. 27.3.8. For the importance of neighbours, see Cracco Ruggini (2003).

again counts up his clients (*suos enumerando*), wondering who you are or whence you came'.<sup>77</sup>

### The formality of meetings

Ammianus Marcellinus illustrates the importance of the morning ritual known as *salutatio* when criticizing the treatment of new guests in aristocratic houses.<sup>78</sup> This was the occasion when, at the beginning of the day, the Roman aristocrat received his friends and clients who came to pay him respect. Ammianus might also indicate the patron's interest in counting and classifying visitors, when he is described as counting up his clients ('*suos enumerando*'). The size as well as the diversity of the visiting crowd mattered: there was a wide difference in the social status of attendants, such as clients, potential clients, and more or less assiduous friends. These ritual greetings were formal occasions, and they had been so since the late Republic at least.<sup>79</sup> Evidence from other parts of the empire, such as Timgad in North Africa and Antioch in Syria, shows that these interactions were hierarchically ordered, confirming the picture painted by Ammianus.<sup>80</sup> Visiting a Roman aristocrat at home was probably not as markedly ordered an experience as paying respect to the provincial governor (who had an *ordo salutationis* inscribed in stone) visiting Timgad, but it was still very different from an informal and relaxed gathering of friends.

Roman senators tried to make an impression and to emphasize the solemn character of these moments as part of both their political strategies and the image they had of themselves. Architecture and decoration played an important part in this process, but other elements were also put to use, as shown by an imperial edict addressed to the urban prefect of Constantinople in 382: '[n]o senator, as long as he lives within the walls, shall claim for himself a military garb, not even in the morning, but shall lay aside the awe-inspiring military cloak and wear the sober clothing of everyday costume'.<sup>81</sup> Although the law refers to the eastern capital, it shows how even clothing could be chosen in order to create a certain representation of power. Similar issues were noted by Jerome, in a letter in which he compares aristocratic and ascetic life:

<sup>77</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.13: 'Hacque affabilitate confirus, cum eadem postridie feceris, ut incognitus haerebis et repentinus, hortatore illo hesterno suos ennumerando, qui sis vel unde venias diutius ambigente.'

<sup>78</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.12–13.

<sup>79</sup> Most of the sources are Late Republican or Early Imperial: see, for a classic description, Friedländer (1913) 207–9; more recently, Goldbeck (2010).

<sup>80</sup> For Timgad, see *CIL* VIII, 17896; also Chastagnol (1978). Libanius gives interesting information for Antioch, see Liebeschuetz (1972) 188–90.

<sup>81</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.10.1: 'Sine exceptione temporis matutini, dumtaxat intra moenia constitutus, nullus senatorum habitum sibi vindicet militarem, sed chlamydis terrore deposito quieta coloborum ac paenularum induat vestimenta'.

But the ostentation, power, and greatness of the city, the seeing and being seen, the paying and receiving of visits (*salutari et salutare*), the praising and belittling, the listening and talking, as well as the need to endure an enormous attendance of men on all occasions, are all alien to the purpose and quietness of monastic life. Indeed, either we [i.e. those who live in the cities] see those who come to us and lose our peace, or we do not see [them], and are accused of arrogance. Sometimes, in order to return visits received, we pass through ostentatious gates and enter through gilded doors, amidst corrosive utterances of servants.<sup>82</sup>

Whereas the life of monks was spent in quietness and peace (according to Jerome), aristocratic life was marked by the obligation of social contacts. Or as he puts it, 'the seeing and being seen, the paying and receiving of visits'. Christian ascetics lived in quietness, but aristocrats had to pay for the visits made to their houses by frequenting the gilded doorways of others. *Salutare* was an action that involved a return, a demonstration of politeness. Jerome's letter also makes explicit the fact that aristocrats were expected to be involved in the ritual of *salutatio*: if Christian ascets could opt for isolation, this possibility was not available to a senator. The latter was responsible for his followers and friends, had to keep his house open for them, and to visit them in return. For the ascetic, everything is rusticity in the dwelling of Christ, as we said above, and apart from the psalms there is only silence.<sup>83</sup>

Banquets were also occasions where social obligation, individual prestige, and personal relations were merged in the domestic space. Formal communal meals were important moments in the lives of aristocrats and their friends, and the architectural history of dining rooms in late antiquity attest to this fact.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, archaeological evidence for *triclinia* in Rome is scarce. The fact that in the eighth- and ninth-century lives of the *Liber pontificalis* the *triclinia* mentioned are known to have been used for different functions,<sup>85</sup> such as hosting synods and councils, reminds us that rooms were usually multi-functional spaces, and other parts of the house (maybe even apsidal halls) could have been used for banquets. We can have a better idea from information given by ancient authors, however,

<sup>82</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 46.12: 'Sed ipsa ambitio, potentia, magnitudo urbis, videri et videre, salutari et salutare, laudare et detrahare, audire vel proloqui et tantam frequentiam hominum saltim invitum pati, a proposito monachorum et quiete aliena sunt. Aut enim videmus ad nos venientes et silentium perdimus, aut non videmus et superbiae arguimur. Interdumque, ut visitantibus reddamus vicem, ad superbas fores pergitur et inter linguas rodentium ministrorum postes ingredimur auratos.'

<sup>83</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 46.12: 'In Christi vero, ut supra diximus, villula tota rusticitas et extra psalmos silentium est'.

<sup>84</sup> Ellis (1997) 41. On the importance of banquets see D'Arms (1999). For the decoration of dining halls and the significance of banquets in Roman culture (including late antiquity), see Dunbabin (2003).

<sup>85</sup> In the papal Lateran palace: *Lib. pont.* II, 3; and in St. Peter's at the Vatican: II, 8, both built by Leo III (797–816). Zacharias (741–52) is said to have built one attached to the basilica built by pope Theodore adjoining the Lateran palace (I, 432). Nicolas (858–67) built one in S. Maria in Cosmedin (II, 161).

and in this case, as in many others, Ammianus Marcellinus was an important (although biased) observer. Banquets were formal social occasions, and declining an invitation was a very difficult decision that risked offending the host. Senators spent a long time considering who to invite, and who not to invite, and failing to appear was perceived as a 'loss of property' by the host.<sup>86</sup> The expression used by Ammianus, '*defectum patrimonii*', although probably an exaggeration of senatorial feelings, is indicative of how these choices were seen as an investment. Ammianus had already emphasized, in another passage, the care with which guests were chosen, even if he did not think much of the attendance.<sup>87</sup> An invitation was, therefore, the product of a careful political calculation. These occasions were not open to all, and just as entrance halls and doorways separated 'outside' from 'inside', there were also servants (*nomenclatores*) in charge of announcing those who arrived for banquets.<sup>88</sup> There was a correspondence between architecture and household staff, elements that helped in the transition between the street and domestic space, turning an entering visitor into a member of the domestic group. Besides controlling who came in, *nomenclatores* made sure they would be known, a fact that should not be underestimated in an aristocratic society.

Houses allowed a more careful selection of who was admitted into one's social circle or not. Passing the threshold of a *domus* required either an authorization or an invitation. In the *Saturnalia* we find an example of a guest being recommended by another, who could not attend the banquet organized by Praetextatus.<sup>89</sup> Invitations and recommendations tried to ensure that those who attended banquets were of suitable rank, but this was not always possible. Just as we have references to the control of those who entered the house, we also have references to those who managed to enter it without being invited. *Nomenclatores* could be bribed to allow someone in, or uninvited guests could simply show up—sometimes to the dissatisfaction of the others present.<sup>90</sup> The reference to uninvited guests forcing their entrance supports the idea other groups were present at banquets.<sup>91</sup> Not only the likes of Symmachus, Flavianus, and Albinus attended Praetextatus' festivities, but also Disarius, a doctor, and Horus, a former athlete turned philosopher.<sup>92</sup> Ammianus' reference to *ignobiles et obscuri* intruders buying the conscience of the host's servants also indicates that these occasions could involve more than just a small group of easily recognizable friends.

In sum, both the rituals of *salutatio* and dining were not only an opportunity for contact, but also specific and formalized moments when aristocrats presented themselves to a selected audience (even if not as selected as desired). These were

<sup>86</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.4.17.

<sup>87</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.14.

<sup>88</sup> e.g. Amm. Marc. 14.6.15 and Macrob., *Sat.* 1.7.1.

<sup>89</sup> Macrob., *Sat.* 1.2.6–7.

<sup>90</sup> Bribing: Amm. Marc. 14.6.15; Macrob., *Sat.* 1.7.1. Note that these are the same passages in which *nomenclatores* are mentioned.

<sup>91</sup> As suggested by D'Arms (1984) 345.

<sup>92</sup> *Sat.* 1.7.1–3.

spectacles of power: the flatterers, criticized by Ammianus for comparing their patrons to the immortals, and the guests, before whom the organizers of banquets paraded different courses (and had the wealth and variety on display recorded), were therefore taking part in events that were designed to impress. Occasions like these were of great importance for the reproduction of the social order within the domestic sphere (but with resonances in the outside world). They served not only as occasions for forging new contacts and strengthening those already existent, but also legitimized aristocratic power. As John D'Arms remarked about Roman banquets, '[f]or a Roman notable, the ostentatious exhibition of wealth was part of self-representation; it reinforced the great man's sense of his own power over those personally bound to him by ties of "clientele", and it set him and his social and political equals, the lofty few, apart from the rest of Roman society, the obscure many'.<sup>93</sup>

### Patrons and clients in the domestic sphere

The ways in which aristocrats could expand their base of power is illustrated by the correspondence between Symmachus and his brother, Celsinus Titianus, who was appointed *vicarius Africae* in 380.<sup>94</sup> In that same year, Titianus received, among others, two letters from his brother dealing with issues related to North Africa. The first letter introduced Clemens, bishop of Caesarea, who—in spite of being Christian—was recommended by Symmachus to discuss problems of unrest in Mauretania. Another letter introduced Rufus, treasurer of the college of priests of Vaga, interested in discussing problems related to the property of land in his hometown.<sup>95</sup> The fact that Titianus occupied a position of authority in Africa (where Symmachus himself had been proconsul a few years earlier) led his brother to introduce these and others to him. These are good examples of how political functions and family ties could lead to the development of personal networks. Houses, whether in Rome or elsewhere, were one of the spaces where these contacts were made concrete. Any social relationship, such as patronage, even if only documented in letters, very often involved a personal contact that had to take place somewhere, and houses were prime locations for these contacts. In a letter datable to 382/384, Symmachus thanked his friend Flavianus for introducing him to one of his 'friends': 'According to your wishes, I received into my friendship my son Aurelianus, who now directs the guards'.<sup>96</sup> Symmachus was probably in Rome at that time, and it is very likely that he received Aurelianus as his *filius* and into

<sup>93</sup> D'Arms (1999) 308–9.

<sup>94</sup> *PLRE* I, Titianus 5.

<sup>95</sup> Respectively, *Ep.* 1.64 and 1.68.

<sup>96</sup> *Ep.* 2.14: 'Aurelianus filium meum, qui nunc cohortes gubernat, in amicitiam te iubente suscepi'.

his *amicitia* at his house. This would echo the reception of new clients at home, as described by Ammianus Marcellinus in the passage cited above.<sup>97</sup>

The importance of houses in patron-client relationships is also demonstrated by the large number of honorific statues dedicated in domestic contexts. This material is conveniently collected in the *Last Statues of Antiquity* database, where we can use the information provided by inscribed statue bases to identify honorific dedications according to the identity of the honorand, the awarder(s) of the monument, and (where the information survives) original context of display.<sup>98</sup> Different groups, such as provincial towns, corporations, and relatives, among others, honoured aristocrats with statues. In the case of dedications by provinces (thirteen in total) and corporations (eleven), the large majority of them were set up in a domestic context.<sup>99</sup> These dedicatory inscriptions are very similar in form, consisting of the name and *cursus* of the person honoured, sometimes his personal qualities, the reason for the dedication, and the identification of the dedicants. The reason for dedicating could be to celebrate the relationship between patron and client, or to give thanks for a benefit received—and sometimes for both reasons. Although referring to deeds and relationships pertaining to the empire's public life, the fact that these honours could be set up in domestic as well as public spaces indicates the extent to which these different spheres were associated. A good example of this is the dedication to Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Paulinus *iunior*, made by the *corpus corariorum*:

(Statue) of Honorius. To Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Paulinus, of *clarissimus* rank, consul, prefect of the City, judge in the imperial court of appeals, proconsul of the provinces of Asia and Hellespontus, judge representing the emperor, legate of Carthage under the proconsul of Africa, Anicius Iulianus, his father; whose forethought, service and integrity in public life ensured, through his attentiveness, that the city-blocks of the guild of tanners (*corpus corariorum*) be restored and embellished to their former condition according to the laws of previous rulers, the emperors Lucius Valerius Septimius Severus and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Augusti. In glorious memory and for all his justice, the guild of tanners decreed [this] to a worthy patron.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.13.

<sup>98</sup> See <<http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk>>; also, for a discussion of the database and its material, Smith and Ward-Perkins (2016).

<sup>99</sup> See, for dedications in houses, Eck (1996) 303 and especially Niquet (2000) 25–33, who refers to houses as semi-public spaces.

<sup>100</sup> CIL VI, 1682 = LSA 1394: 'Honorii. Ammio (sic) Manio Caesonio Nico/macho Anicio Paulino, v(iro) c(larissimo), cons(uli) ordinario, / pr(a)eff(ecto) urbi, iud(ici) sacrar(um) cognit(ionum), [pr]oconsuli / prov(in)ciae Asiae et Hellesponti vice sacra iudicanti, / legato Kart(h)acinis (sic) sub procons(ule) Afric(a)e Anicio / Iuliano patre suo, cuius providentia adque / eutilitas (sic, for 'utilitas') et integritas rei publicae corporis / corariorum insulas ad pristinum statum / suum, secundum leges principum priorum, / impp(eratorum) [L(uci)] Val(erius) (sic) Septimi Severi et M(arci) Aur(eli) Antonini Augg(ustorum),

Although the place of discovery of the base recording the statue of Paulinus is unknown, its most likely context of dedication is a domestic one. Other dedications were recorded as being made ‘in the house’ of the honorand, as in the case of the bronze-clad statue set up in honour of Alfeius Ceionius Iulianus.<sup>101</sup> A large number of inscriptions (not just related to statues) found on the Caelian Hill, near the Church of S. Stefano Rotondo, provides us with a striking example of this type of manifestation in a domestic space. The group of inscriptions, found at different dates, belonged to the *domus* of the Valerii, excavated in the late nineteenth century, and consisted of five statue bases and six bronze *tabulae patronatus*.<sup>102</sup> The bases were dedicated by provincials and corporations to Lucius Aradius Valerius Proculus, celebrating him as patron.<sup>103</sup> Proculus was a member of a very prestigious family and had a successful career, being urban prefect on two occasions (in 337 and in 351) and consul in 340. He was also honoured by Constantine and his sons with an inscription put up in the Forum of Trajan for his public and private virtues.<sup>104</sup>

A number of African communities paid homage to Proculus’ brother, Quintus Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus, *praeses* of Byzacena. Six bronze tablets celebrating his patronage over these communities were also dedicated to him.<sup>105</sup> The careers of Lucius Aradius Valerius Proculus and Quintus Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus had given them opportunities for establishing new links of patronage, or possibly even to strengthen those already held by their family. The public visibility of their family made them ideal patrons, being owners of considerable wealth, with access to the court, as well as influential in political circles and in the workings of the imperial government. As was already practice in the early empire, their houses would have been the most suitable space possible for the celebration of this power.<sup>106</sup> Patrons, when honoured in other cities, had their statues dedicated in public spaces, such as *fora* and entertainment buildings. In Rome, the setting up of honorific statues in domestic contexts reinforced the public character of aristocratic houses, while at the same time ensuring that visitors would have a concrete reminder of the house-owner’s political status. Patronage tables were official documents that recorded the decision of a city’s council or assembly to

/ restaurari adque adornari pervigilant/ia sua providit. In mira memoria adque / in omnia iustitia sua, corpus coriariorum / patrono digno statuerunt.’

<sup>101</sup> CIL VI, 1675 = LSA 1392: ‘...statuam in domo sub aere posuerunt’.

<sup>102</sup> This house will be discussed in detail in the next Chapter, pp. 248–50.

<sup>103</sup> CIL VI, 1690–4 = LSA 1396–1400. On Proculus, see PLRE I, Proculus 11.

<sup>104</sup> CIL VI, 40776 = LSA 2685: ‘Repetentibus nobis insignem nobilitate prosapiam Proculi c(larissimi) v(iri) eiusdemq(ue) virtutes privatim et publice decursis officiis cognitatis intuentibus...’. See, on Proculus and this inscription, Weisweiler (2012B) 309–13.

<sup>105</sup> CIL VI, 1684 = EDR 111462; CIL VI, 1685 = EDR 111463; CIL VI, 1686 = EDR 111464; CIL VI, 1687 = EDR 104113; CIL VI, 1688 = EDR 111466; and CIL VI, 1689 = EDR 106434. See PLRE I, Proculus 12.

<sup>106</sup> As observed by Eck (1997A) 78–9.

establish a formal relationship with a powerful protector. As such they were as suitable for a city's public square as for an aristocrat's *atrium*—and the same can be said of honorific statues.<sup>107</sup> In this context, Olympiodorus' reference to houses as cities containing *fora*,<sup>108</sup> cited above (pp. 207–8), gains a whole new dimension: monumental squares were important settings for the dedication of honorific monuments, and domestic spaces could be used in the same way.

The life and career of Sextus Petronius Probus, a man described in inscriptions as the 'summit of the Anician line', is a good illustration of the importance of patronage and of the centrality of houses in the social and political standing of Roman aristocrats.<sup>109</sup> Probus' position and power were due to the fact that he constantly held the highest imperial offices.<sup>110</sup> According to Ammianus, he did it because of the constant demands by members of his *familia*, looking for positions, promotions, and favours.<sup>111</sup> As well as a source of power and prestige, clients influenced the behaviour of their patrons by way of their requests and needs. In this sense, the letter in which Symmachus advised Probus to accept, albeit with resignation, yet another magistracy, might be interpreted as more than a mere compliment.<sup>112</sup> These elements were brought together in the inscribed dedication set up in the grounds of the family house on the Pincian Hill, by the people of Probus' native province of Venetia et Histria in 378:

To the summit of the nobility, light of letters and eloquence, example of authority, master of foresight and government, promoter of humanity, patron of moderation, high priest of devotion, Petronius Probus, of *clarissimus* rank, proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italy, and Africa, ordinary consul. On account of the extraordinary types of relief shown towards them, by his own men in Venetia and Histria [set this up] to their most outstanding patron.<sup>113</sup>

Probus' political success put him in the position of receiving recommendations, such as Romanus, a follower of Symmachus. In this case, Symmachus asked Probus for his help in order to promote the career of Romanus.<sup>114</sup> The centrality of Probus' house in these networks was confirmed years later, when his sons Anicius Probinus and Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius were made consuls (in 395). As Claudian observed, in the panegyric read on that occasion, that

<sup>107</sup> Dubouloz (2011) 516–17. <sup>108</sup> Frag. 41.1.

<sup>109</sup> CIL VI, 1753 = LSA 1460 ('*Anicianae domus culmen*'). On Probus, see PLRE I, Probus 5.

<sup>110</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.11.2. Probus' career has attracted great attention and debate. See Lizzi Testa (2004) 316–19.

<sup>111</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.11.3. See discussion in Matthews (1990) 196.

<sup>112</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 1.58.

<sup>113</sup> CIL VI, 1751 = LSA 272: '*Nobilitatis culmini, / litterarum et eloquentiae lumini, / auctoritatis exemplo, / provisionum ac dispositionum magistro, / humanitatis auctori, / moderationis patrono, / devotionis antistiti, / Petronio / Probo, v(iro) c(larissimo), proconsuli Africae, / praefecto praetorio / per Illyricum, Italiam et Africam, / consuli ordinario. / Ob insignia erga se remediorum genera, / Veneti adque Histri peculiares eius / patrono praestantissimo.*'

<sup>114</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 1.60.



‘[t]he thick cloud of his [i.e. Probus]’ generosity was ever big with gifts, *full and overflowing with clients was his mansion*, and thereinto poured a stream of paupers to issue forth again rich men [emphasis added].’<sup>115</sup> Houses were, therefore, a very important space for the construction of political networks through clientship and the distributions of favours.

The house, as a space for interaction among aristocrats, was also where political opportunities could be found. As observed by the fifth-century Gallic bishop Orientius, visiting a house was a path for achieving a public magistracy.<sup>116</sup> It is another Gaul, living in Rome in the second half of the fifth century, who describes this mechanism of political ascension. Sidonius Apollinaris, in a letter to his friend Heronius, tells him how being accepted at the house of the former urban prefect Paulus helped him in his career.<sup>117</sup> His new friend was a man with access to the court and to the upper circles of Roman aristocratic society, and put him in the position of choosing between two potential patrons. These were Gennadius Avienus, consul in 450, who was concerned with the advancement of members of his own house, rather than of new acquaintances, and Flavius Caecina Decius Basilius, praetorian prefect and consul in 463, who although holding high magistracies less frequently, was more profitable from an outsider’s (like Sidonius’) point-of-view.<sup>118</sup> As the Gallic aristocrat observed, ‘[w]hen we had carefully weighed the considerations in favour of each, the discussion between us arrived at this compromise, that while still paying due respect to the elder consular [Avienus], at whose house I was indeed a fairly frequent visitor, I should attach myself more particularly to the train of Basilius’.<sup>119</sup>

Sidonius’ strategy was successful. Basilius arranged for him to compose a panegyric to Anthemius, and this led to his nomination to the urban prefecture in 468.<sup>120</sup> Frequenting houses, paying visits to powerful aristocrats, and becoming a member of his domestic circles were fundamental tools for the advancement of a political career. Unfortunately, Sidonius does not specify the types of encounters he had with the aristocrats he visited: were they private meetings? Were they also attended by other potential clients? Did he have to wait until being invited to meet his patron? It must be remembered that Sidonius was not a poor and humble client, but someone of significant standing in his native Gaul, who came to Rome in an important diplomatic mission. It is very difficult to establish a clear frontier between patronage and friendship when analysing social relationships,

<sup>115</sup> Claudian, *Pan. Prob. et Olyb.* 45–7 (transl. Platnauer).

<sup>116</sup> *Commonitorium* 173–4 (PL 61.981).

<sup>117</sup> *Ep.* 1.9.1. On Paulus, see *PLRE* II, Paulus 36.

<sup>118</sup> *Ep.* 1.9.3–4. See *PLRE* II, Avienus 4 and Basilius 11 for their career.

<sup>119</sup> *Ep.* 1.9.5 (transl. Anderson).

<sup>120</sup> *Ep.* 1.9.6. On Sidonius’ career, see *PLRE* II, Apollinaris 6. For his sojourn in Rome, see Harries (1994) 141–50.

but Sidonius offers us a good starting point for discussing another political use of domestic space: the visits paid and received by members of the senatorial elite.

### Greater and lesser visitors

Visits occupied an important part in the social and political life of the Roman *domus*. By entering the house of someone of equal or similar standing, the Roman aristocrat had the possibility of establishing face-to-face contact, at the same time that he showed consideration for his friend or acquaintance. Visits were important political occasions in this sense, when powerful Romans had the possibility of establishing or strengthening their personal links. The physical contact between visitor and those visited provided them with the same kind of 'social reassurance' that Symmachus sought in the continuous exchange of letters with his friends. As John Matthews rightly emphasized, taking part in a continuous exchange of letters played an important role in Symmachus' view of political life and *amicitia*, and the fourth-century senator himself expressed in a number of ways the significance he attributed to it.<sup>121</sup> A letter was a material reminder of a personal relationship, and it is reasonable to assume that a visit was an even more powerful statement of the same feeling.

Visits also created the possibility of discussing relevant issues face to face, of canvassing support for political ambitions, and lobbying in favour of decisions or policies. It should be remembered that the late Roman aristocratic *milieu* was to a great extent a 'relational society', in which 'who someone knows' could be as important as 'who someone is'. A parallel might be made with the imperial court, itself having evolved from a very powerful aristocratic *domus*. They had at their core a group formed by the *dominus* and his family, the servile household, and his friends. New friends and members could be added, but only through recommendation: as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill pointed out with relation to the court, it was not 'open to talent'.<sup>122</sup> Cicero had already remarked how useful hospitality could be, saying that it was proper for a house to be open to illustrious Romans and foreigners, as this was an honourable way of gaining influence and gratitude in Rome and abroad.<sup>123</sup> This political calculation can also be seen in the actions of Symmachus, who had more than one house in Rome, and used his properties to receive guests visiting the city.<sup>124</sup> It is probably to one of these houses that Symmachus referred in a letter to Flavius Mallius Theodorus, who was about to

<sup>121</sup> See Matthews (1974). For examples of Symmachus' expectations concerning his correspondence with his friends, see *Ep.* 4.28; 5.97; 6.70.

<sup>122</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1996) 288. See also Winterling (1997) 16 for the importance of personal and physical interaction as a way of receiving favours in the court.

<sup>123</sup> Cicero, *Off.* 2.64.

<sup>124</sup> Mentioned in *Symm., Ep.* 3.14.

assume the consulship (as we saw in Chapter 4).<sup>125</sup> In the letter, datable to 398, Symmachus tried to reassure Theodorus, saying that he should not worry about his lodgings at Rome, where he would be able to rest before assuming his new political position. Hosting a future consul was not an act 'free of ulterior motives', and the political advantages to be gained from it were too obvious for such an experienced politician as Symmachus. Purer intentions might have led the Christian aristocrats Melania and Pinianus to receive in their house the ambassador sent by the Constantinopolitan patriarch John Chrysostom in 398. The advantages gained from it should not be overlooked, however: not only did they secure for themselves a reference in Palladius' (the ambassador himself) *Historia Lausiaca*,<sup>126</sup> but they also strengthened their links with eastern ecclesiastical and political circles.

A good example of how visits could be used as part of a political strategy is given by Symmachus in a letter to the brothers Petronius and Patroinus, also datable to 398.<sup>127</sup> The main subject of the letter is Nicomachus Flavianus *iunior*'s return to Rome, and how much he [Symmachus] would appreciate it if his son-in-law would bring the brothers his personal greeting: '[t]he main point of my letter is that, on returning to his homeland [Rome], he [Flavianus] will bring you his eternal affection, and your greetings to me in return'.<sup>128</sup> Nicomachus' political career had been compromised since the downfall of the usurpation of Eugenius in 394, and both Petronius and Patroinus occupied important political functions in the court, being very influential in imperial circles.<sup>129</sup> The letter, and the visit paid by Flavianus, were part of the strategy for re-inserting him into the most important spheres of power, after having spent some time in obscurity. It apparently worked, as he was appointed urban prefect in 399.<sup>130</sup>

Christian writers were aware of the importance of making and receiving visits. As noted in Chapter 5, the development of Christianity in fourth- and fifth-century Rome was closely connected to the houses of powerful men and women. Aristocratic house-owners were influential not only because they were among the greatest donors to the church, but also because they constantly received the visits of bishops and other clerics. In fact, it is almost exclusively through Christian texts that we can see the role played by aristocratic women in this circuit of visits. Paulinus' biography of bishop Ambrose tells us that, during a period in Rome, even the powerful bishop of Milan visited a Christian lady who lived in Trastevere.<sup>131</sup> This was not something new for Ambrose, since as a child he used

<sup>125</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 5.11; see above, pp. 135–6.

<sup>126</sup> Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 61.7.

<sup>127</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 7.102.

<sup>128</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 7.102: 'Mei sermonis haec summa est ut in patriam redux sibi perpetuum amorem vestrum, mihi mutuam reportet salutationem'.

<sup>129</sup> On the brothers, see *PLRE* I, Petronius I and Patroinus.

<sup>130</sup> See *PLRE* I, Flavianus 14: Flavianus came to Rome to attend the inauguration of Theodorus' consulship, on which see above.

<sup>131</sup> Paul. Mil., *V. Amb.* 10 (*PL* 14.30).

to see many clerics paying respect to his mother at home.<sup>132</sup> Jerome described, in many of his letters, how preachers (including himself) competed to become part of a circle of wealthy ladies, trying to visit as many as possible, in the shortest amount of time. Competition led to rivalry, and Jerome criticized his competitors bitterly, and also the women that received them, accusing them of spreading heresies. An ill-reputed visitor and rumours of 'unorthodox' teachings could bring shame to a house.<sup>133</sup> A number of Jerome's letters were addressed to the women whom he used to visit, and in one of these he defended himself against criticism of his visiting habits.<sup>134</sup> The wider political relevance of visits by members of the clergy becomes more evident when we remember that the Christian community was frequently divided into internal factions, and these conflicts spiked out into the life of the city as a whole.

In a letter to Iulia Eusthocium, Jerome worried that she might be visiting other aristocratic women, and advised her not to do so. These were women who met (or so he says) to boast of the power of their husbands, and even widows took part in such meetings, taking the opportunity to display their wealth.<sup>135</sup> Outside Christian circles, these meetings of matrons were the target of a highly satirical passage of the *Historia Augusta's* life of the emperor Elagabalus, in which it is mentioned that he and his mother created a women's *senaculum* on the Quirinal, where previously there was a *conventus matrimonialis*.<sup>136</sup> Here, as usual, we must be careful with the information given by the *Historia Augusta*. This passage is part of a larger section aimed at criticizing the Severan emperor, who let his mother attend senatorial meetings,<sup>137</sup> and particularly stresses the absurdity of the decrees passed by the women who attended the meetings of this *senaculum*. Satirical exaggeration apart, the references in Jerome and in the *Historia Augusta* suggest that aristocratic women did frequent each other, and even Christian virgins took part in such occasions. Members of the Christian clergy also attended such meetings, as well as flatterers and clients, increasing these women's power.<sup>138</sup>

Even emperors were expected (at least by senators) to take part in the aristocratic circuit of visits. This was already the case in the early empire: Suetonius tells us that Vespasian, for example, used to receive his friends' visits early in the mornings.<sup>139</sup> The biography of Antoninus Pius in the *Historia Augusta* says that he received his friends as a private man, even while doing domestic business.<sup>140</sup> This is a good indication of what late Roman senators thought of as being the ideal behaviour of a good prince—the *civilis princeps* was an important element in early

<sup>132</sup> Paul. Mil., V. *Amb.* 4 (PL 14.28).

<sup>133</sup> On this circuit of visits and the spread of heresies, see Maier (1995A) 237. For Jerome's criticism, see *Ep.* 50.1; 22.28; and *C. Vig.* 3 (PL 23.341–2). On visits bringing shame to houses, see *Ep.* 133.13.

<sup>134</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 45.3–4. <sup>135</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 22.16.

<sup>136</sup> *SHA, Heliogab.* 4.3–4. <sup>137</sup> *SHA, Heliogab.* 4.1–2.

<sup>138</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 22.16. As Jerome observed: '[p]lena adulatoribus domus, plena convivis'.

<sup>139</sup> *Vespasian* 21. <sup>140</sup> *SHA, Ant. Pius* 6.12.

imperial political thought and practice, and seems to have remained dear to later senators.<sup>141</sup> The life of Melania describes her visit to the empress Serena in great detail, and gives us a good idea of how these visits might have taken place. The first imperial invitations were declined by the Christian aristocrat. This raised a difficult issue, as the Christian lady had to humiliate herself in order not to offend the empress with her refusal (although we are not informed what this meant).<sup>142</sup> When Melania finally decided to visit Serena, the occasion was arranged through the mediation of bishops.<sup>143</sup> The Christian ascetic and her husband Pinianus came to the palace (it is not specified which one), and brought with them many presents, which were refused by the empress, who later warned her servants that no one should accept anything from the couple. The empress, when seeing the famous Christian, came towards her, embraced her, and kissed her eyes. Melania and Pinianus' objective was to secure imperial support for selling their properties, and this was achieved.<sup>144</sup> Such an exceptional account of a visit by a devout woman to an empress gives us some indication of the niceties and formalities involved in the practice of exchanging visits. The court was a model for the senatorial houses, and the fact that the passage in question refers to so many elements at play in the aristocratic circuit of visits should also be taken into account. We have already discussed issues such as the access to residences, the role of intermediation in having access to them, and also the problems of precedence and status involved in a visit. Melania's visit might be seen as a distorted model of senatorial visits (to emperors or fellow senators)—although distorted for its exceptionality, still illustrative of the elements involved.

We also have at least two references to actual imperial visits to aristocrats' houses, and this is a fact of great importance for the understanding of the relationships between houses and political power. In 348, a certain Sabbatius (sic) buried his Christian son Gaianus, former count in the imperial consistory (*comes consistorianus*), and the epitaph informs us that the deceased had hosted the emperor during a visit to the city.<sup>145</sup> The inscription probably refers to one of Constantine's visits to Rome, but it provides no further details. The occasion was important enough to be recorded in the epitaph of an aristocrat who, as the inscription tells us, led a happy life and died a happier death (*'felix vita viri, felicius exitus ipse'*). It would be an exaggeration to think that emperors were part of the same aristocratic circuit of visits we have been discussing, but it is important to consider the role played by houses in the expression of political status. Pacatus'

<sup>141</sup> See A. Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 32–48.

<sup>142</sup> *V. Mel. Lat.* 11.2. We can see parallels with Ammianus' aristocrat who feels humiliated when an invitation to a banquet is turned down: 28.4.17.

<sup>143</sup> *V. Mel. Gr.* 11.

<sup>144</sup> The visit is narrated in great detail both in the Greek and Latin texts, with a few differences: *V. Mel. Gr.* 11–13; *V. Mel. Lat.* 11–13.

<sup>145</sup> *CIL* VI, 33865 = *EDR* 163937: 'Advenit hospes princeps Romanus in urbem'. This is the only reference known to both Gaianus and his father, see *PLRE* I, Gaianus 4.

panegyric to Theodosius describes the emperor's behaviour in Rome, how he appeared 'to all as a *princeps*, to individuals as a senator', and how he 'also consecrated private dwellings with [his] divine footsteps, free from the custody of the soldiers . . .'.<sup>146</sup> Such references to imperial visits to aristocratic *domus* might seem, at first sight, to be at odds with the ideas of invisibility and isolation that were so important in court ritual, almost implausible events.<sup>147</sup> On the contrary, imperial visits to private houses were a traditional element of both political rhetoric and practice. A number of early imperial examples show emperors acting in this way,<sup>148</sup> and the late fourth-century biographies of emperors such as Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Alexander Severus indicate that such behaviour remained associated with emperors considered good by the Senate.<sup>149</sup>

Discussing the relationship between housing and ceremonies in Tudor England, Mark Girouard observed that Elizabeth I's visits to members of the nobility could have different political aims: as a form of chastening those who were politically suspect (forcing them to spend enormous amounts to receive the court and prove their loyalty), but also as a form of distinction, as hosting the queen could lead to rewards.<sup>150</sup> An interesting aspect of these visits is the degree of (physical) transformation through which these houses passed, in order to accommodate the queen and her attendants: new rooms were built, others were enlarged, new decoration was put up, and it is probable that the owner of the house himself had to move elsewhere. Furthermore, Tudor monarchs spent relatively long periods in the houses of their subjects, and this must have had a great impact in the political geography of the kingdom. We do not have any evidence of something similar taking place in late antique Rome, but it is reasonable to assume that the most important visits would be preceded by—at least—adaptations to the decoration of the house, like displaying imperial statues and busts. The house was, after all, a symbol of the owner, of his standing and ambitions.

### Conclusion: The 'Power House'

The fact that the late antique *domus* was at the core of an aristocrat's power is of great importance for the understanding of how this power was maintained, expanded, and expressed. Late antique aristocrats followed, in this case, precedents already established in the early empire. The great difference lies in the extent to which houses came to serve the political and social strategies of their powerful owners. As should be clear by now, the identification of domestic space (or, to be more specific, parts of it) with political space was common to both Christian and

<sup>146</sup> *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).47.3 (transl. Nixon).

<sup>147</sup> See Kelly (1998) 143.

<sup>148</sup> See discussion and evidence collected in Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 40.

<sup>149</sup> *SHA, Hadr.* 9.7, *Ant.Pius* 11.7, and *Alex.Sev.* 4.3.

<sup>150</sup> Girouard (1978) 111.

pagan senators. These were members of the same social and political *milieu*, and religious conversion did not change this fact. Christianity had a great impact on the development of new forms of social solidarity, in which new definitions of 'community' came to play an important role. This development led to a change in the nature of visitors to aristocratic houses, including not only bishops and preachers (seen above), but also the poor. We know through the Latin life of Melania that after her father died she and Pinianus left the city for the suburbs, where they '...began to be protectors of pilgrims and to be free to care for the poor'.<sup>151</sup> Jerome noticed this change in a letter, in which he celebrated the '... doors, that before vomited the greeting crowds [of clients], and now [i.e. after Christianization] are frequented by the miserable'.<sup>152</sup>

These domestic interactions between Christian aristocrats and poor visitors were less ritualized than the traditional exchange of visits and greetings between patrons and clients, while at the same time more efficient at the day-to-day level. They involved smaller sums of money, distributed to those who were not included in the traditional lists of distribution, and who were not considered as potential clients.<sup>153</sup> Houses retained their function as poles of attraction, as places to which people came and where resources were spent, but now dealing with a wider attendance. This combination of continuity and expansion of one's social base can be seen in a few references in the Acts of Martyrs, most of them composed between the fifth and eighth centuries.<sup>154</sup> These are difficult and challenging texts, that pose a multitude of difficulties to the historian, from their date to their actual reliability. They are good indication, however, of what was culturally expected—or acceptable—by members of the Christian community, and as such they provide useful insights into social life in late antique and early medieval Rome. Thus the martyrs Polycarp and Sebastian, when visiting a house, found a crowd of believers.<sup>155</sup> Christian preachers could find, in the houses they entered, not only an audience for their preaching, but also opportunities for operating miracles. A good example is the blind man cured by Lawrence in the *domus Narcisi* on the Caelian, a place where the saint found 'many Christians'.<sup>156</sup> The probably much later passion of the martyr Alexis tells us of the aristocrat Euphemianus, *primus in palatio Imperatoris*, who protected and sheltered orphans, widows, pilgrims, and the poor in general, who came to his house.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>151</sup> *V. Mel. Lat.* 7.1: '... et coeperunt esse peregrinorum susceptores et pauperum curis vacare'.

<sup>152</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 66.5: 'Fores quae prius salutantum turbas vomebant nunc a miseris obsidentur'.

<sup>153</sup> Brown (1982) 131–3.

<sup>154</sup> Or at least this seems to be the current consensus: the basic work is still Dufourcq (1900) 293–321, where he discussed different traditions. A different, manuscript-based approach was recently suggested by Pilsworth (2000), who tends to accept this period for the composition of most of the acts.

<sup>155</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani* 1 (AASS Ian. II.270): 'turba credentium'.

<sup>156</sup> *Acta S. Laurentii* 1 (AASS Aug. II.518). Also Delehaye (1933) 83–4, with variations.

<sup>157</sup> *Acta S. Alexii* 1 (AASS Iul. IV.251). On the dating of this text, see *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 1, 814–23. Although the original Syriac version is probably from the sixth century, no Latin version is attested before the tenth.

The spread of Christianity led to the increased political and social importance of houses. We can read religious texts like the Acts of Martyrs in a political way. They speak, for example, of the 'army of Christ' (*milites Christi*) assembled in the house of a matron on the Caelian.<sup>158</sup> This is clearer in the acts of the martyr Lawrence: the Christian preacher was ordered by the future emperor Valerian to bring the 'treasure' he had received from bishop Sixtus to the emperor Decius. Lawrence's response was to gather a multitude of blind, disabled, weak, and poor Christians, and bring them to the palace, saying to the emperor, *magna voce*: 'These are the eternal treasure, that is never diminished nor decreased: that is scattered in each one, and is found in all'.<sup>159</sup>

Throughout late antiquity, domestic buildings remained closely associated with aristocratic power, to an extent unparalleled since the time of Augustus. Houses were more than monuments to their owners, and more than a symbol of their ambitions and status; they were an actual basis for their social and political 'clout'. Christian writers understood this, and Christian aristocrats explored the possibilities brought by the new religion and its social teachings. Late Roman emperors certainly knew that senators had a great influence on the lives of many Romans, and were aware of the symbolic importance of the *domus* in late Roman political life. For the reigning Augustus in his palace, as well as for the poor living in the streets of Rome, it was clear that these houses were centres of power, in a symbolic, political, as well as in a topographical sense. They were places where power was exercised. There were important continuities with the early empire, as observed above, but the new realities of imperial power had an impact on the role played by houses in Rome's topography of power. The progressive distancing of the court, in a first phase, and its progressive weakening in the West probably opened a larger space for manoeuvre for these magnificent houses. Just as the establishment of imperial rule under Augustus and his successors led to a greater control over these houses and the senatorial appropriation of space, the decline of imperial power opened up space for the reassertion of the senatorial elite.<sup>160</sup> This process changed the city in a very physical way, helping to create a new—and specifically late antique—urban landscape. This is what we will explore in the next chapter.

<sup>158</sup> *Acta S. Cyriacae* 2 (AASS Aug. IV.403).

<sup>159</sup> *Acta S. Laurenti* 4 (AASS Aug. II.518–19): 'Ecce isti sunt thesauri aeterni, qui numquam diminuuntur, nec decrescunt: qui in singulis aspergitur, et in omnibus invenitur'. The same events are narrated with difference in the *Passio SS. Xysti et Laurenti* (Delehaye (1933) 88–9), and see also Prud., *Perist.* 2.137–84. On the assistance of the poor as a social strategy, see Brown (1992) 89–117.

<sup>160</sup> See Machado (2012A) 138–43.



## Aristocratic Power and Politics in the Domestic Sphere

Sometime between 510 and 511, the Ostrogothic king Theoderic sent a letter putting the *vir inlustris* and *comes* Arigernus in charge of resolving an unusual dispute involving the Roman Church. Arigernus lived in Rome for a few years, where he performed different missions for the court, including an investigation into the outbreak of violence surrounding the election of bishop Symmachus in 502, acting as a judge in the trial of senators, and overseeing an enquiry into anti-Jewish violence in the city.<sup>1</sup> This time, the Ostrogothic *comes* was instructed to look into a controversy concerning a *domus* allegedly purchased by bishop Simplicius (468–83) a few decades earlier:

The lawyers of the sacrosanct Roman Church have complained that Simplicius, of blessed memory, once purchased a house located in the holiest city from the cleric Eufrasius, with all the required documents, which they say was owned by the Roman Church for many years, according to impartial laws, being transferred to a new use without damage to its property rights; but now people of the Samaritan superstition have come forth with shameless impudence, claiming with lies that there was a synagogue on that place, which cannot be the building mentioned, as it is known that dwellings for human use are built in a very different style.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the allegations of the Christian lawyers, it is clear that this was a complicated dispute. It involved the royal court in Ravenna, which felt it necessary to make use of a representative in Rome. Arigernus was close to the king, as indicated by the importance and frequency of his assignments—the Ostrogothic

<sup>1</sup> See *PLRE II*, Arigernus for his career and activities.

<sup>2</sup> Cass., *Var.* 3.45: ‘Defensores itaque sacrosanctae ecclesiae Romanae conquesti sunt beatae recordationis quondam Simplicium domum in sacratissima Urbe positam ab Eufraxio acolutho instrumentis factis sollemniter comparasse, quam per annorum longa curricula ecclesiam Romanam quieto iure suggerunt possedisse et in usus alios transtulisse securitate dominii. Nunc autem existere Samareae superstitionis improba fronte duratum, qui synagogam ibidem fuisse iniquis conatibus mentiatur, cum ad humanos usus habitacula longe aliter formata doceantur, quam potest esse memorata constructio.’ See also the comments of I. Mastroianni, in Giardina (2014) 278–80.

authorities wanted a reliable assessment of the case and of the arguments presented. The fact that the function of a building that was still standing could be disputed by contemporaries illustrates the complex nature of domestic structures. Houses were multifunctional spaces, borrowing architectural elements from other types of buildings, like temples and palaces. Their splendour and dimensions made them suitable for meetings and interactions of different nature, be it for senatorial assemblies (like the promulgation of the Theodosian Code) or for religious worship—as a church or a synagogue.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the use of aristocratic houses as political and social spaces, examining how this type of structure helped to shape life in late antique Rome, as well as its impact on the very definition of urban space. This is not an easy task. The archaeological evidence for domestic buildings in late ancient Rome is frequently fragmentary and confusing, differently from what we know for cities like early imperial Pompeii or late antique Ostia.<sup>3</sup> Another set of difficulties arises when we try to identify what types of activity took place in specific parts of the house. Rooms could be used for different purposes, and many aspects of human behaviour leave no permanent or evident trace in the archaeological record.<sup>4</sup> Changes in use do not correspond to changes in architecture either, as the issue involving the Samaritans and the Church shows, and there usually are no straightforward correspondences between domestic life and the architectural layout of a house.<sup>5</sup> Literary references to different practices can also be challenging, as they are often vague in terms of their specific spatial setting. It is possible, however, to analyse different aspects of the political use of domestic spaces, and how they helped to shape the city of Rome in late antiquity. In order to do this, we will first consider the impact that the building and use of aristocratic residences had in the urban space as a whole. We will then analyse a group of four exceptional buildings, for which we have richer evidence (archaeological, epigraphic, and literary), as a way of examining their use and impact on the urban fabric. We will then be able to discuss what were the main political activities that could take place in the domestic sphere (or perhaps we should say those that are better documented), considering the interaction between public power and private spaces in late antique Rome. A concluding session will consider the fate of aristocratic houses in the fifth and sixth centuries, examining how these developments might shed light on the unravelling of aristocratic dominance over the city.

<sup>3</sup> See, for Pompeii, Wallace-Hadrill (1994); for Ostia, Pavolini (2011).

<sup>4</sup> See discussion in Allison (1993).

<sup>5</sup> Vitruvius, *De arch.* 6.5.1–2 is frequently cited in this context, but it should be taken as a useful guide, rather than as a set of rules. See, for the subversive possibilities offered by domestic spaces, the case of the Soviet-era Narkomfin building, in Moscow, studied by Buchli (2000).

## Houses and Late Antique Urban Space

How many aristocratic houses were there in late antique Rome? Or, to put it more precisely, how important was the presence of senatorial residences in the late antique cityscape? There were many types and sizes of aristocratic dwellings in late antique Rome, from grand palaces richly decorated with marble panels and mosaics to humbler houses. Words like *domus* and its Greek counterpart *oikos* thus refer to a wide range of buildings, even when employed in a clear aristocratic context. Late antique Romans dealt with this issue in very general terms. As we saw in the previous chapter, Olympiodorus of Thebes compared each of its rich houses to a town, concluding that Rome contained ten thousand towns.<sup>6</sup> Olympiodorus was praising the former imperial capital, its greatness and wealth, and his description was marked by great rhetorical exaggeration. It was part of a specific literary tradition, a panegyric to the city, and yet such numbers should not be dismissed as mere fantasy, as the image of a city might be as important as its materiality. The residences of the elite were one of the salient components of the cityscape, as well as an important element in late antique discourses about the glories of the *Urbs*. The same attitude can be found in the Regionary Catalogues and their recorded 1,790 *domus* (an approximate figure, since the numbers recorded do not match).<sup>7</sup> In spite of its apparent bureaucratic precision, this too should be seen as an inflated claim to greatness. It should not be dismissed, however. The Regionaries record many houses, locating them in different parts of the city, and Jean-Pierre Guilhembet has analysed this information in terms of its topographical distribution.<sup>8</sup> The resulting picture is one of a great concentration of elite residences in central areas of the city, most notably in Regions VIII (*Forum Romanum*) and X (*Palatium*), but also in the south-eastern parts of Rome, especially on the Aventine and Caelian Hills. This is in agreement with the available archaeological evidence, indicating that members of the Roman elite continued to favour the same areas they did in the early empire.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of continuities, there were important differences between the late antique and earlier periods. Even when practices observable in our period are shown to have precedents, these are carried out in a very different scale. This is clearly seen in terms of the encroachment of domestic buildings onto previously existing structures, the reuse of building materials, and the private appropriation of the city's water-supply.<sup>10</sup> A good example of this is the apsidal hall, very likely belonging to a late Roman *domus*, later converted into the church of Ss. Quattro Coronati, on the Caelian (Fig. 7.1). Part of the brickwork still visible on the apse and on the northern lateral wall has been dated, according to the building

<sup>6</sup> Frag. 41.1. <sup>7</sup> See Guidobaldi (1999) 55.

<sup>8</sup> Guilhembet (1996). <sup>9</sup> Observed by Guidobaldi (1999) 55–6.

<sup>10</sup> See, for a more detailed discussion, Machado (2012A) 143–52.

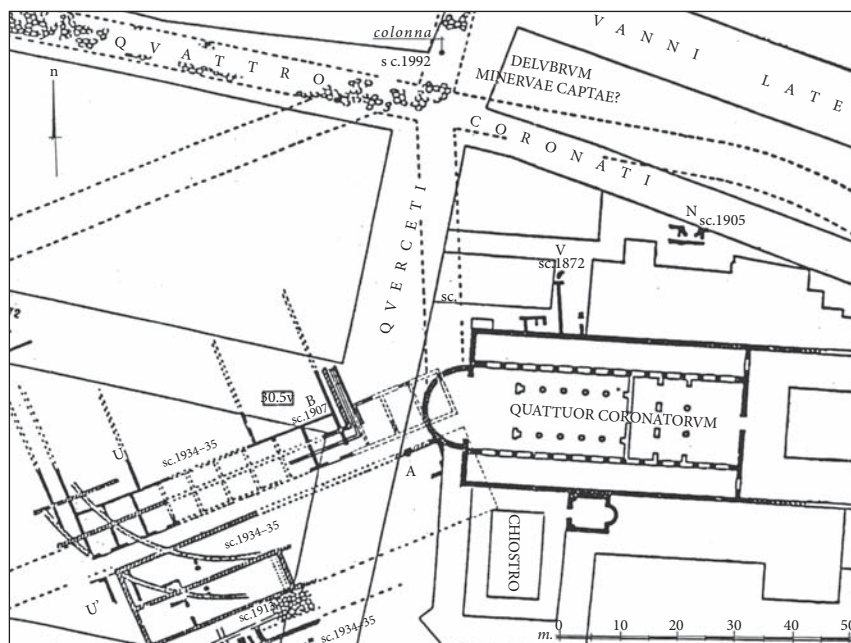


Fig. 7.1. The Basilica of Ss. Quattro Coronati and its vicinity.

From C. Pavolini, 'Nuovi contributi alla topografia del Celio da rinvenimenti casuali di scavi', *Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma*, 1994–5, p. 176, with the author's kind permission.

technique, to the fourth century. Although building technique is not enough evidence to establish a precise date, in this case it is supported by the type of architecture and, most importantly, urban context.<sup>11</sup> The analysis of the apse and the excavations on modern day via dei Querceti revealed that two pre-existing (possibly from the early second century) buildings were incorporated into the late antique structure, blocking an ancient street.<sup>12</sup> The incorporation of older buildings and the blocking of public spaces, such as streets, are usually considered important characteristics of late antique *domus*,<sup>13</sup> even though they are also attested for earlier periods. In fact, late Republican and early imperial legislation already showed great concern with the protection of previously existing structures (public and private) and the upkeep of urbanistic order.<sup>14</sup> It seems that, throughout Roman history, the interplay of public and private interests remained a central factor in the definition of urban space. And yet, it is for the late antique period that the encroachment of public structures and spaces by *domus* is more clearly

<sup>11</sup> See Krautheimer, *CBCR IV* (1970) 10–11 for the dating of the structure. The identification as a *domus* was convincingly argued by Guidobaldi (1986) 192.

<sup>12</sup> Colini (1944) 292–5; see also Pavolini (1993) 45 and (1994–5) 72–7.

<sup>13</sup> As pointed out by Guidobaldi (1999) 56–7.

<sup>14</sup> Homo (1951) 597–637; Robinson (1992) 33–46.

documented in the archaeological record, indicating that the practice had become more widespread by that time.<sup>15</sup> This development is certainly related to a change in the definition of the role and authority of urban prefects, as seen in Chapter 1, an authority that was much more open to the influence and pressures of his peers than in previous periods.<sup>16</sup>

The same process of intensification of an older practice can be seen in the reuse of building materials and architectural decoration. Earlier legislation tried to control the demolition and spoliation of pre-existing buildings, and Hadrian had gone as far as forbidding the demolition of private houses with this aim in view.<sup>17</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, however, the reuse of building materials reached new and unprecedented levels in late antiquity, in both public and private works. The construction of grand and magnificent houses in late antique Rome had a great impact on the pre-existing urban fabric, not only because they were built on top of it, but at its expense. An exceptionally well-documented example for Rome is provided by the house excavated on the *vicus Caprarius*, near modern-day Trevi Fountain. Here, at least part of the marble pavement consists of reused slabs that were previously part of funerary monuments. The second-century statue of a deceased girl, discovered in one of the rooms, probably also came from a necropolis, turned into an ornament.<sup>18</sup>

We are not as well informed about other houses in Rome, but the picture suggested above is supported (and complemented) by the better documented case of Ostia. There, the analysis of reused marble in private and public buildings of the late antique period indicates that different types of monuments—especially funerary ones—were spoliated and had their remains stored in specific deposits for later reuse. This is suggested by the reuse in houses of fragments of the *fasti* of Ostia and of the decoration of the so-called college of the Augustales as revetment of late antique fountains and nymphaea, for example, as well as by the reemployment of slabs with funerary inscriptions, some of them from one same necropolis.<sup>19</sup> The importance of necropoleis and funerary monuments as a source of reusable building material is confirmed by a law addressed by Constantius II and Julian to the urban prefect Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (357–9), against those who, seeking private profit, despoiled tombs, taking the material for reuse in their own houses.<sup>20</sup> As families died out, or simply adopted new areas for celebrating their deceased, old funerary monuments became an easy prey for private builders. Although this cannot be properly measured, it is more than likely that this practice became more common from the fourth century onwards, as legislation went from banning to accepting it.

<sup>15</sup> As argued in Machado (2012A); Santangeli Valenzani (2007B) argues that this should not be seen as the privatization of Rome's public spaces.

<sup>16</sup> See also Guidobaldi (1999) 57. <sup>17</sup> *SHA, Hadr.* 18.2; see Robinson (1992) 45.

<sup>18</sup> See, besides Machado (2012A) 147, the publication of Insalacco (2005).

<sup>19</sup> As noted by Pensabene (1998) 37. The reuse of inscribed marble had already been observed in several houses by Becatti (1948).

<sup>20</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.3.

A similar development can be observed in the case of the supply of water to senatorial *domus*. A system of distribution to private residences was already in place in early imperial Rome, and the analysis of surviving *fistulae aquariae*, water conduits frequently inscribed with the names of house-owners, shows that members of the upper *strata* of the senatorial order were among the main beneficiaries of such a luxury.<sup>21</sup> There is also evidence for the illegal appropriation of water by individuals, and Frontinus—a writer with first-hand knowledge of the system—suggests that this was the case in the late first century.<sup>22</sup> The situation did not change in late antiquity, as legislation preserved in the Theodosian Code shows, and it would remain the same until at least the Ostrogothic period.

There is no late imperial description of the water supply of Rome comparable to Frontinus' work on the aqueducts, but the workings of the system can be better understood through a law addressed to the urban prefect of Constantinople in 382. The law stated that the volume of water at the disposal of any house owner should vary according to his status and wealth of his house.<sup>23</sup> In Rome, a law issued by Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius in 389 established that only imperial favour could grant permission to use water in private houses, and that this should not affect the main conduits supplying the city.<sup>24</sup> The operation of the system was therefore perceived as a political issue, dependent on who had the ability to secure such a privilege and opening it up to favouritism and corruption. A law of 398 established a fine on the 'shameful' people who requested use of water destined to the mills of the city.<sup>25</sup> Two years later, imperial legislators turned their attention against those who were damaging the Aqua Claudia:

No person by a fraudulently elicited permission shall think of claiming for himself the use of the Claudian Aqueduct by breaking and perforating its sides. If any person should contravene this regulation, he shall be immediately punished by the forfeiture of such buildings and lands. Besides, we constrain the office staff in whose custody is the care of this work, by this punishment, namely, that they shall be fined by the payment of as many pounds of gold as the number of inches of water from our Claudian Aqueduct which are proved to have been appropriated by their connivance.<sup>26</sup>

The illegal appropriation of the public supply of water was not exclusive to Rome, but the association of private interests and local officials was particularly acute in the old capital.<sup>27</sup> Late Roman officials were directly involved in the despoliation of

<sup>21</sup> See Bruun (1997) 145–9. As Bruun noted, personal proximity to the emperor, rather than an inherent social privilege, was the main criterion for such favour (p. 145).

<sup>22</sup> Frontinus, *Aq.* 76.2 and 105–7. See the comments of Bruun (1997) 139.

<sup>23</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.2.3.

<sup>24</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.2.5, addressed to Ceionius Rufius Albinus, urban prefect between 389–91.

<sup>25</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.15.4. <sup>26</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 15.2.9 (transl. Pharr).

<sup>27</sup> See 15.2.2–8 for other parts of the empire.

the city, and perhaps it is not a coincidence that when Theoderic complained about the appropriation of water for private use, he did so in a letter addressed to the Senate, instead of to an urban magistrate. The king acknowledged the gravity of the situation when he observed that in some cases these irregularities had already taken place more than thirty years earlier, and law itself prevented him from punishing their perpetrators. He also used this opportunity to lament the general despoliation of the city by its own citizens, as if he had already seen the connection between these processes.<sup>28</sup> Although not original to late antiquity, these developments were of a very different scale from what can be seen in earlier periods. The fact that the late antique *domus* were what we called 'power-houses' probably increased their impact on the surrounding urban space and on the resources of the city. Such residences were not only appropriating the *Urbs* in a physical sense, taking over its spaces, natural resources, and physical structures; they also did it in a more subtle way, as spatial centres that attracted people to themselves. As such, they were in direct competition with the *fora*, theatres, and Christian churches that dominated so much of late Roman public life.

### Domestic Spaces in a Political Perspective

The difficulties posed by the archaeology of houses in late antique Rome are well illustrated by the structure unearthed on the Esquiline in 1873 (Fig. 7.2: A). Rodolfo Lanciani, its excavator, suggested that the walls were of a fourth-century date, but went on to observe that the structure consisted of a confusing sequence of walls that could not be described or analysed properly.<sup>29</sup> A large number of fragments of statues and of marble pavement was found, together with three statue bases, two dedicated to Naeratius Cerealis, urban prefect (352–3) and consul (358), and one to his son, Naeratius Scopus.<sup>30</sup> Cerealis was celebrated in one of the dedications as *conditor balnearum*, and this led Lanciani to suggest that his baths should be located in this area. The *balnea* of Cerealis are mentioned in a number of inscribed bases (ten of which have been documented) recording the setting up of statues in the year of his consulship. Most of the known bases are now lost, and they were first recorded in different parts of the city, but the fact that one of them was found in the Esquiline excavations supports Lanciani's suggestion.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Cass., *Var.* 3.31.

<sup>29</sup> Lanciani (1874) 88.

<sup>30</sup> Respectively: *CIL* VI, 1744a = *LSA* 1447 and *CIL* VI, 1745 = *LSA* 1435 (Cerealis); *CIL* VI, 1746 = *LSA* 1456 (Scopus). *CIL* VI, 31917 (+ pp. 4793–4) was found in this area, but it does not belong to the building. See also *PLRE* I, Cerealis 2 and Scopus for the owners of the house.

<sup>31</sup> The bases are: *CIL* VI, 1744c = *LSA* 790; *CIL* VI, 1744a' = *LSA* 1446 (both from the Esquiline); *CIL* VI, 1744a = *LSA* 1447 (found on the Caelian); *CIL* VI, 1744k = *LSA* 1449; *CIL* VI, 1744b = *LSA* 1448; *CIL* VI, 1744e.f.l = *LSA* 1450; *CIL* VI, 1744d = *LSA* 1451; *CIL* VI, 1744h = *LSA* 1452; *CIL* VI, 1744 = *LSA* 1453; and *CIL* VI, 1744g = *LSA* 1454 (all of uncertain provenance).





almost next to the basilica [i.e. S. Maria Maggiore (Fig. 7.2: B)], with bath and bakery'. It almost certainly belonged to Neratius Palmatus, a descendant of Cerealis, and possibly the urban prefect of 412.<sup>32</sup> A statue of Jupiter was discovered a few blocks away (Fig. 7.2: C), dedicated by 'Neratius Palmatus, of *clarissimus* rank, owner and founder of this place', belonging to the same context.<sup>33</sup> The wealth of the family is confirmed by a passage in a letter of Jerome, in which he tells Principia, a Christian aristocrat, that when Cerealis, already in his old age, proposed to marry the Christian ascetic Marcella, with the approval of her family, the response was that '... if [she] wished to marry, ... [she] would marry a husband, not an inheritance'.<sup>34</sup> Cerealis' house illustrates not only the difficulties posed by this type of material, but also the wealth of information that it might provide. The economic, social, and cultural history of Rome have much to gain from the analysis of this material, just as does our understanding of political life in the late antique city.

### The 'domus' of the Sette Sale

The large cistern that was part of the Baths of Trajan on the Oppian Hill, known to us as Sette Sale, has deservedly attracted great attention from archaeologists, not only for its enormous size and architecture, but also because of the house that was built on top of it (Fig. 7.3).<sup>35</sup> The northern and eastern parts of the structure did not survive, and it is impossible to reconstruct the house's plan in its entirety. Two main building phases have been identified, one in mixed technique combining brick edges with rows of small tufa blocks (*opus mixtum*) of Trajanic date, and the other late antique, probably from the fourth century, employing irregular courses of reused blocks of tufa (*opus vittatum*).<sup>36</sup> The later phase involved substantial changes to the complex. A nymphaeum (Fig. 7.3: A) was built, and decorated with white marble revetment. This structure led, through an open space, to a room (of Trajanic date) of uncertain function on the opposite side, with an early imperial black and white mosaic pavement.

A large apsidal room was built (Fig. 7.3: B: 17.45 × 13.86 m) next to the nymphaeum, with *opus sectile* marble pavement and wall revetment. A great variety of marble fragments belonging to the walls was found, consisting of figures of plants, animals, and architectonic decoration. Not only the cutting, but also the

<sup>32</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 233: 'intra urbe, iuxta inibi basilicae, cum balneum et pistrinum'. For Palmatus, see *PLRE* I, Palmatus 1 = Palmatus 2 = *PLRE* II, Palmatus.

<sup>33</sup> See *LSA* 2538: 'Ner(atius) Palmatus v.c., loci dominus conditoriq(ue)', with references.

<sup>34</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 127.2: 'Si vellem nubere... utique maritum quaererem, non haereditatem'.

<sup>35</sup> See de Fine Licht (1990) for the cistern. For the house, see the original publication of Cozza (1974–5) and more recently Volpe (2000).

<sup>36</sup> Guidobaldi (1986) 171 suggests the early fourth century due to the building technique, and Cozza (1974–5) 94 because of the marble pavement.

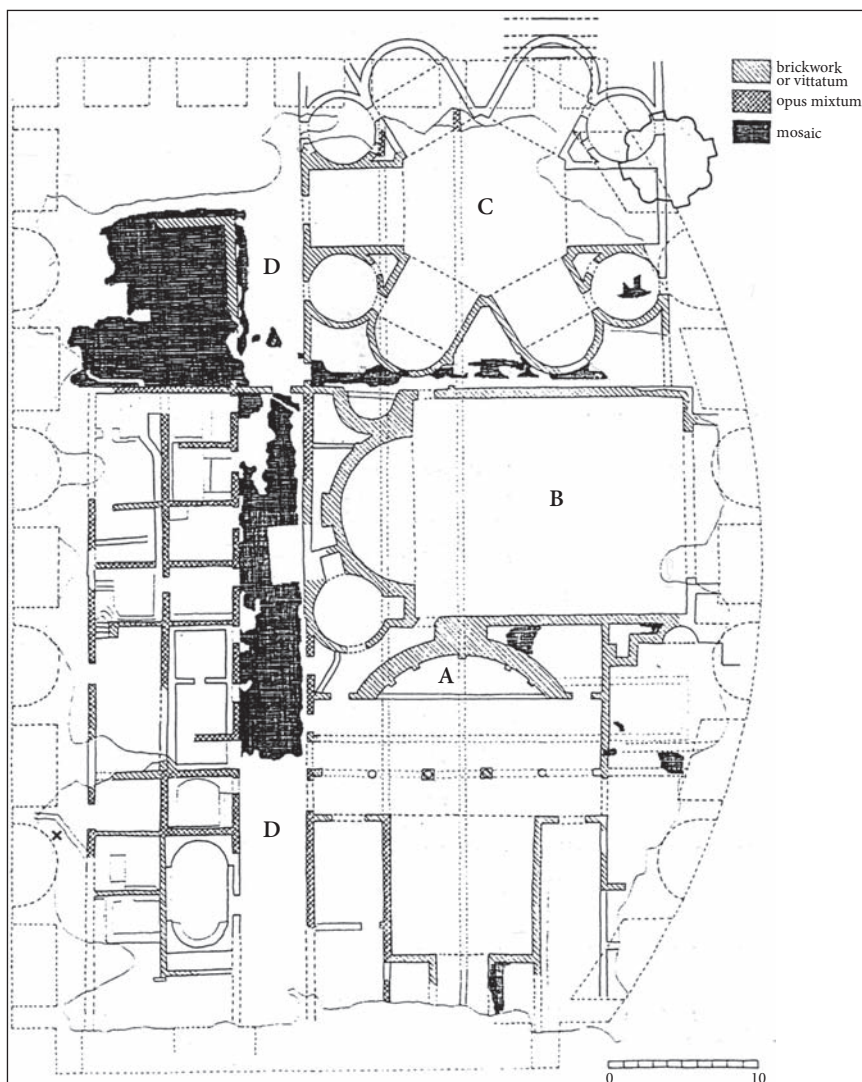


Fig. 7.3. The *domus* on top of the Sette Sale cistern.

From: K. de Fine Licht, *Untersuchungen an den Trajansthermen zu Rom. 2. Sette Sale*, *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici Supplementum XIX*, Rome 1990, Abb. 107, with permission of the publisher, L'Erma di Bretschneider.

treatment of the material at the time of construction indicate a high degree of technical expertise (and therefore greater costs).<sup>37</sup> The apse was also finely

<sup>37</sup> Similar to the *domus* of Iunius Bassus and the one outside Porta Marina in Ostia, as observed by Bianchi et al. (2000) 352–4. For the pavement, see Bianchi, Bruno, and De Nuccio (2002), and Cozza (1974–5) 96–8.

decorated, but its pavement was laid on a level higher than that of the rest of the room, creating a tribunal-like space that put the owner on a different level from those visiting him.<sup>38</sup> The most interesting room, in architectural terms, is the one on the north-east corner (Fig. 7.3: C), consisting of one central hexagonal space leading to small rooms on each of its sides, two of rectangular form and four with an apse at the end, all decorated with coloured marble.<sup>39</sup> The innovative architecture and the prestigious decoration suggest that this was an important room. Although its function cannot be defined with certainty, it was a reception space, probably a very elaborate dining room. It is possible that there was a corridor or even a porticoed courtyard giving access to these grander parts of the house, but we cannot be sure.<sup>40</sup>

There is a clear distinction between 'grand' and 'humble' spaces, the latter being located on the west side, separated by a corridor (Fig. 7.3: D). These were mainly rooms built in Trajanic times but still in use, distinguishable from the more luxurious parts of the house not only by their building technique, but also by the style of pavement (more immediately visible to users), usually monochromatic and with simpler geometric motifs.<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested that the Trajanic house was the headquarters of one or more functionaries connected to the Baths of Trajan, but this is impossible to prove.<sup>42</sup> These imperial *thermae* were, after all, among the most impressive imperial foundations in the centre of the city. Emperors used it as setting for statues honouring athletes in the late fourth century (continuing earlier practice), and the urban prefect Campanianus decorated it with a statue in 465/467.<sup>43</sup> It would be interesting, in this sense, to know whether the late Roman *domus* was a radical innovation or just an adaptation of a previously existing house. In any case, this would mean the privatization of a public structure that was still functioning at the time—a powerful assertion of the house-owner, in a conspicuous part of town.

### The 'domus' of the Caelian

The area at the top of the Caelian Hill, crossed by modern-day Via di S. Stefano Rotondo, has been continuously excavated for the past five centuries. The discovery of a large number of inscriptions, coins, fragments of statues, frescoes, and mosaics led scholars to the conclusion that this was an important aristocratic

<sup>38</sup> Cozza (1974–5) 98. <sup>39</sup> Cozza (1974–5) 94.

<sup>40</sup> Suggested by Guidobaldi (1986) 170.

<sup>41</sup> See Vincenti (1997) 831. Note that walls of Trajanic date (some also Severan) are also present on the east side of the house.

<sup>42</sup> By de Fine Licht (1983) 831 and more recently by Volpe (2000) 160.

<sup>43</sup> Imperial dedications: *CIL* VI, 10153 = *LSA* 1516 (383–92) and *CIL* VI, 10154 = *LSA* 1491 (363–75); urban prefect: *CIL* VI, 1673 = *LSA* 1352.

quarter in late antiquity. Excavations carried out in this area revealed a number of *domus*, of which three are of particular interest to us: the *domus* of Gaudentius, of the Valerii, and of the Symmachi (Fig. 7.4). Unfortunately, a large part of the work carried out in this area was extremely unsystematic, and even modern excavations were limited by constraints of time and space, being part of works for the building and later renovation of two military hospitals in the area. However, in spite of

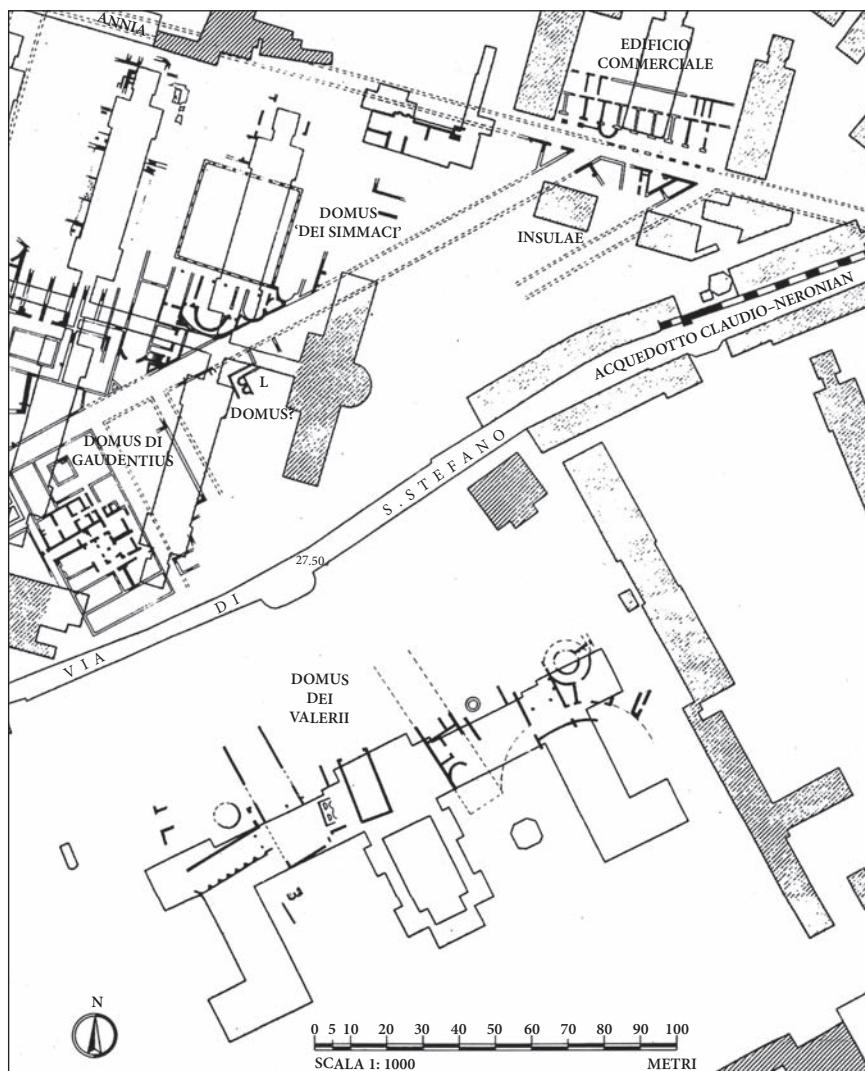


Fig. 7.4. The *domus* on the summit of the Caelian Hill.

From C. Pavolini, 'Le domus del Celio', in *Aurea Roma*, ed. S. Ensoli and E. La Rocca, Rome 2000, p. 147, with the author's kind permission.

these difficulties, the material evidence is rich enough to allow discussion of these houses in terms of their political use.

### The *domus* of the Symmachi

A large *domus*, excavated in the area of the Ospedale Militare (Fig. 7.5), has been identified as belonging to the family of the Symmachi, at least in its late

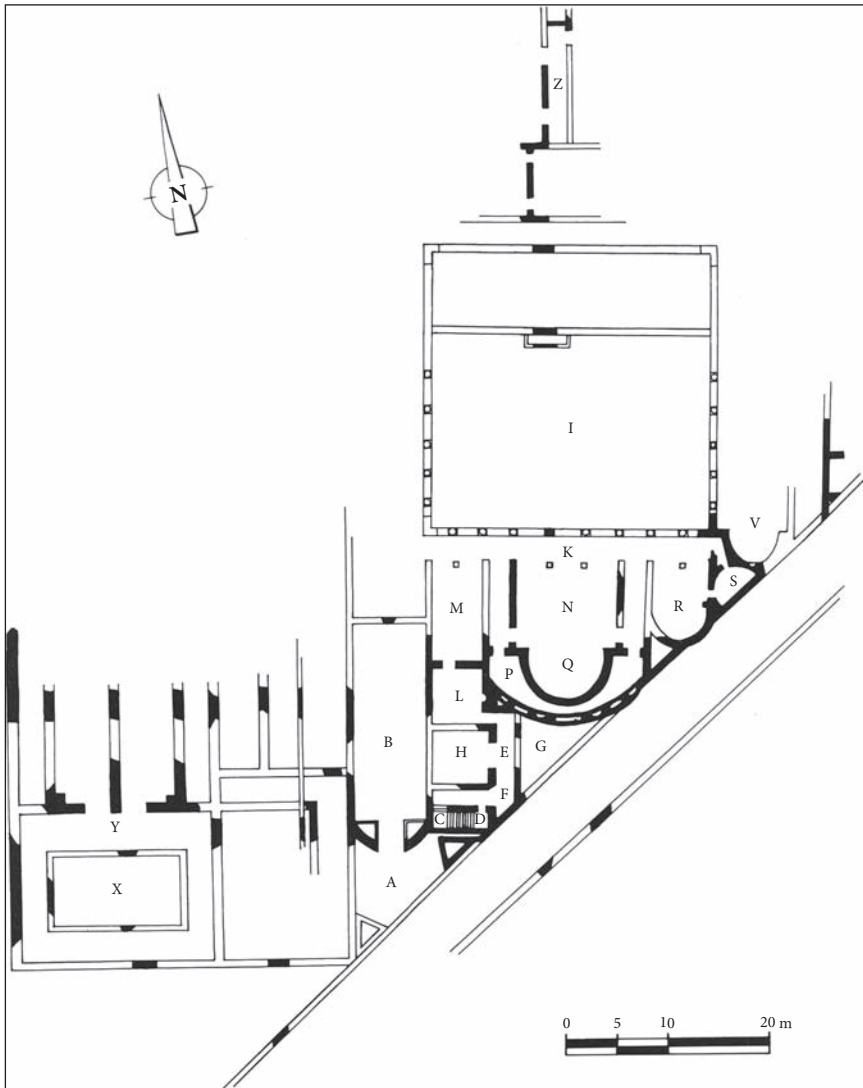


Fig. 7.5. The *domus* of the Symmachi.

From C. Pavolini et al., 'La topografia antica della sommità del Celio. Gli scavi nell'Ospedale Militare', *RM* 100, 1993, fig. 17, with the author's kind permission.

antique phase.<sup>44</sup> Quintus Aurelius Symmachus mentioned the location of his house on the Caelian in his correspondence,<sup>45</sup> and two inscribed bases of honorific statues dedicated by his son, possibly on the same date, were found in this area. One is a dedication to Symmachus himself: 'To Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, of *clarissimus* rank, quaestor, praetor, higher pontiff, governor of Lucania and Bruttii, count of the third order, proconsul of Africa, prefect of the city, ordinary consul, most skilful orator, by Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, of *clarissimus* rank, to his most excellent father'.<sup>46</sup> The other was dedicated to Memmius' father-in-law: 'To Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, of *clarissimus* rank, quaestor, praetor, higher pontiff, governor of Sicily, vicar of Africa, quaestor in the palace, twice praetorian prefect, ordinary consul, most skillful historian, by Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, to the most excellent grandfather of his wife'.<sup>47</sup> The remarkable careers and achievements of his distinguished connections were thus monumentalized in the courtyard of the *domus*. Among the objects found in this area are a brick-stamp with the inscription 'Sym(machus)', and the fragment of a glass cup, also bearing an inscription, mentioning 'Summachus consul o(rdinarius)' and 'Q. F(abius) S(ummachus)', probably celebrating Symmachus' consulship (in 391) and his son.<sup>48</sup> The identification of this house, supported by the presence of the house of Gaudentius nearby (see discussion in the next section), is of great importance, since Symmachus' political activities and connections might help to illuminate the understanding of the political use of houses.

The *domus* in question was adapted from an earlier building, probably from the late second or early third century. Its sheer size was an eloquent statement of power, having been estimated as c.6,500–8,500 square metres, and therefore among the largest in late antique Rome.<sup>49</sup> The very entrance of the complex was a statement of the owner's power (Fig. 7.5: A), decorated by a triangular fountain and directly open onto the street. Entrances of houses traditionally played an important part in defining the relationship between owners, visitors, and passers-by. They gave a first impression of the house's prestige, and on special occasions, such as when a member of the family was appointed to an important official

<sup>44</sup> Guidobaldi (1995E) collects the epigraphic and literary evidence. The house was published by A. Carignani, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 483–502; see also Carignani (2000).

<sup>45</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 3.12; 3.88; 7.18; 7.19.

<sup>46</sup> *CIL* VI, 1699 = *LSA* 270: 'Q(uinto) Aur(elio) Symmacho, v(iro) c(larissimo), / quaest(ori), praet(ori), pontifici / maiori, correctori / Lucaniae et Brittiorum, / comiti ordinis tertii, / procons(uli) Africae, praef(ecto) / urb(i), co(n)s(uli) ordinario, / oratori disertissimo. / Q(uintus) Fab(ius) Memm(ius) Symmachus, / v(ir) c(larissimus), patri optimo.'

<sup>47</sup> *CIL* VI, 1782 = *LSA* 271: 'Virio Nicomacho Flaviano, v(iro) c(larissimo), / quaest(ori), praet(ori), pontif(ici) maiori, / consulari Siciliae, / vicario Africae, / quaestori intra palatium, / praef(ecto) praet(or)io iterum, co(n)s(uli) ord(inario), / historico disertissimo. / Q(uintus) Fab(ius) Memmius Symmachus, v(ir) c(larissimus), / prosocero optimo.'

<sup>48</sup> Brick-stamp: *CIL* XV, 1714. Although the brick-stamp and the inscriptions on the cup are abbreviated, the fact that they were found together supports their reading, see Carignani (2000).

<sup>49</sup> Carignani in Pavolini et al. (1993) 494; also Carignani (2000) 148.

function, the doorways were decorated with garlands.<sup>50</sup> The vestibule (Fig. 7.5: B) was a long rectangular room with an apsidal wall serving as entrance. Although the apse did not exist at the time of the original construction, it was built before the late antique phase, when two small fountains were built on each side of the doorway. The vestibule was a richly decorated area, with a marble *opus sectile* pavement, and served not only as a luxurious entrance to the house, but also as an articulating space between the western and eastern sectors of the complex.

The *domus* of the Symmachi has not been completely excavated, but only its more public parts. The 'reception area' on the eastern side of the complex, especially the rooms around the apsidal hall, is more directly connected to our concerns here. This part of the house was built flanking a courtyard, surrounded by a *porticus* (Fig. 7.5: I and K). The rooms to the south of this courtyard are of different forms, and the most impressive in plan is a large room with an exedra at its southern end (Fig. 7.5: N, Q, and P). The room was a single space until the fourth century, when it was subdivided by the erection of walls and of an apse. These changes created an apsidal hall (Fig. 7.5: N and Q) with a corridor running around it (Fig. 7.5: P).<sup>51</sup> The pavement was elaborately decorated, with two different styles of marble *opus sectile*, and with the part corresponding to the apse on a higher level, like in the Sette Sale. These changes also transformed the setting that framed the appearances of the house-owner in public, for whereas the earlier exedra was decorated with niches for statues, the fourth-century apse masked it, being itself decorated with marble revetment and with a mosaic adorning the apse's ceiling.<sup>52</sup> Symmachus' interest in mosaics and *opus sectile* is well documented in his correspondence,<sup>53</sup> and here we can actually see a choice of one *medium* of self-display over another, probably with the same purpose, to cause an impression on viewers, but with different visual effects.

The spaces adjacent to the grand apsidal hall (Fig. 7.5: M, R, and S) probably served different purposes. The room on the western side (Fig. 7.5: M), whose function remains unknown, was impressive enough in itself (c.50 m<sup>2</sup>), and allowed the connection between the *porticus* and the inner parts of the house. The rooms on the eastern side (Fig. 7.5: R and S), however, were of different shape, allowing the articulation of spaces together with the perimetral wall. Their function remains uncertain, but the fact that they were located in one of the more grandiose parts of the house, and especially that they were part of the reception area, reminds us of an observation made by Seneca in his *De beneficiis*. The early imperial aristocrat noted that Romans usually received clients and friends in different spaces, saying that Gaius Gracchus and Livius Drusus were the first to

<sup>50</sup> Rut. Nam., *De red. suo* 1.423–6; for earlier considerations on the subject, see Plut., *Poplicola* 20.2.

<sup>51</sup> Carignani, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 488 suggests that this corridor could have been used by servants.

<sup>52</sup> Carignani, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 488–9.

<sup>53</sup> See discussion in pp. 206–7, and *Ep.* 1.12; 6.49; 6.70; and 8.42.

separate the reception of crowds from the reception of their closest friends.<sup>54</sup> To receive visitors of different status in more or less exclusive rooms was a mechanism of distinction, not only of social distinction, but also of the importance and secrecy of what was discussed in such meetings. Walls, doors, and curtains allowed the articulation and expression of hierarchies of personal status, filtering access to the inner parts of the *domus* and to the most important political decisions made. This is true also for other societies, such as early modern England, where the use of cabinets and antechambers became more common precisely for this reason.<sup>55</sup> Symmachus, who led an active political life, being involved in major debates (including an usurpation), is someone for whom this type of spatial differentiation would be well suited.

### The *domus* of Gaudentius

Just south of the house identified as that of Symmachus, another *domus*, probably belonging to his associate Gaudentius, was found (Fig. 7.4).<sup>56</sup> The identification of the owner of this house was made possible by the discovery of a mosaic inscription at the centre of the room identified as the *triclinium* (Fig. 7.6: G): 'Gaudenti v[ivas]'.<sup>57</sup> The function of the *triclinium* is indicated by the presence of rectangular marble slabs along its walls (indicating where the couches would have been located). One of its sides opened on to a small *porticus* (Fig. 7.6: F and I) and a courtyard (Fig. 7.6: C), around which the south-east side of the house was organized. It was not possible to excavate the western wall, but, as Spinola suggested, this was probably where the niche with the famous statue of the Casali Antinoos (now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, in Copenhagen) was found.<sup>58</sup> The floor decoration was a mosaic with images of flowers and peaches, datable to the second century. At the centre, the mosaic inscription with Gaudentius' name was inserted re-arranging the pieces of the original pavement.<sup>59</sup>

The identification of the house suggests that two political associates, Gaudentius and Symmachus, lived next to each other. In this case, we know that Symmachus played an important role in Gaudentius' career, as attested by two letters of recommendation (both datable to 398–9) to men of important standing in the court. In one of these, Gaudentius was praised for being 'a man worthy of being loved for every reason', and for his senatorial origins.<sup>60</sup> We also know,

<sup>54</sup> Seneca, *Ben.* 6.33.3–34.2.

<sup>56</sup> See *PLRE* II, Gaudentius 3.

<sup>57</sup> The excavations were published by G. Spinola, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 473–83; see also Spinola (1995) and (2000).

<sup>58</sup> Spinola (1992) 971–4. The finding of the statue and its setting were recorded by Maffei and Ficoroni, in the early eighteenth century: see Moltesen (2004) esp. pp. 101–4 and 114–15.

<sup>59</sup> Carignani and Spinola (1995) 407–8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ep.* 4.38: '... vir omnibus rebus amari dignus'.

<sup>55</sup> A process analysed by Girouard (1978) 143–5.



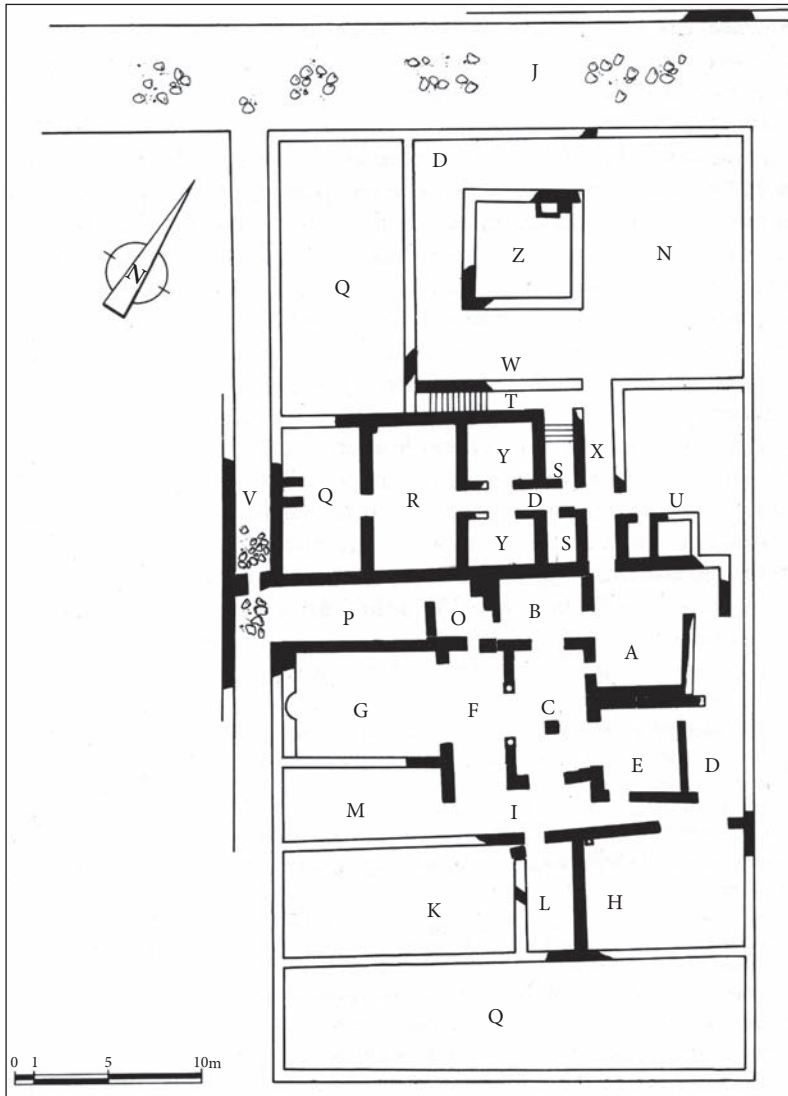


Fig. 7.6. The *domus* of Gaudentius.

From C. Pavolini et al., 'La topografia antica della sommità del Celio. Gli scavi nell'Ospedale Militare', *RM* 100, 1993, fig. 13, p. 478, with the author's kind permission.

through a letter probably addressed to Hadrianus, an important official at the court, that on at least one occasion Gaudentius acted as an emissary for Symmachus.<sup>61</sup> It is more than likely that this relationship helped in Gaudentius' appointment as *vicarius Africae* in 402, when Hadrianus was praetorian prefect for Italy

<sup>61</sup> *Ep.* 7.45; Hadrianus was *magister officiorum* at the time, see *PLRE* II, Hadrianus 2 for his career.

and Africa.<sup>62</sup> More than just illustrating the physical proximity between the two senators, these houses remind us of how important the relationship between neighbours could be.

### The *domus* of the Valerii

The family home of the Valerii was located in the same area, next to the houses of Symmachus and Gaudentius (Fig. 7.4). The excavation of this building was carried out during the construction of the Ospizio dell'Addolorata in the early twentieth century and again in the 1990s, but our knowledge of the plan of this house remains poor (Fig. 7.7).<sup>63</sup> Structures varying in date (from the late Republic until the fourth century) were found on this site, and it has recently been suggested that the house was built on top of an earlier one.<sup>64</sup> It is difficult to make sense of what structures were part of the late antique house, but the *porticus* on the western side (Fig. 7.7: a) and the bath complex on the northern side, including a large *aula* with marble revetment are worthy of note (Fig. 7.7: f). In spite of the confusing situation on the ground, there are a few elements that can be observed. Since the sixteenth century, a number of discoveries in the *atrium* of the house have attracted great attention. Among these, the bases of honorific statues dedicated to L. Aradius Valerius Proculus and the bronze *tabulae patronatus* dedicated to his brother, Q. Aradius Rufinus Valerius Proculus, mentioned in the previous chapter. These celebrated the power and prestige of the two brothers, and their connections with different groups of Roman and provincial society.<sup>65</sup> Honorific statues and *tabulae patronatus* were, furthermore, prestigious objects that added to the honour of any house and family. Ligorio left a more detailed report of the finds, also locating them in the *atrium*. Together with the inscriptions, there were statues of famous historical characters, philosophers, and different herms.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that the *porticus* found in 1902 was part of this *atrium*, as three marble herms were found there in their original position, between columns and the wall.<sup>67</sup> It is very likely that another statue-base found in this same area, dedicated to the third-century consul L. Valerius Publicola Balbinus Maximus, came from the same location.<sup>68</sup> If this identification is correct, these finds illustrate the political importance of the *atrium*, a space for the celebration of past and present members

<sup>62</sup> Gaudentius was in office when he received *Cod. Theod.* 7.15.1.

<sup>63</sup> See Gatti (1902A) 267–9; (1902B) 356; (1902C) 463–4; (1903A) 59; and (1903B) 92; see also Pavolini (1994–5) 84–8 for the recent works. Gatti (1902D) and Colini (1944) 253–8 remain fundamental. Further excavation was undertaken in 2005, revealing late Republican and early imperial phases abandoned and buried in the third century: see Barbera, Paladino, and Paterna (2008).

<sup>64</sup> Pavolini (1994–5) 85–7.

<sup>65</sup> Respectively, *CIL* VI, 1690–4 = *LSA* 1396–1400 (bases) and *CIL* VI, 1684–9 (tables). See pp. 221–2 above.

<sup>66</sup> Cited by Hülsen (1901) 205–6. Ligorio's account should be treated with caution, however.

<sup>67</sup> Gatti (1902D) 158. Colini (1944) 255 disagrees with this identification, but does not explain why.

<sup>68</sup> As suggested by Colini (1944) 258. See *CIL* VI, 1532 = *EDR* 111336 for the base.



of the family, and at the same time for recording and advertising the family's political connections.

The Valerii converted to Christianity in the course of the fourth century, and a number of bronze objects such as lamps and cups attest to their adherence to the new faith.<sup>69</sup> It is possible that this was the same property that a later member of the family, Pinianus, tried to sell after his spectacular conversion to ascetic life. The biography of his wife Melania informs us that the Christian couple wanted to sell their house on the Caelian as a form of freeing themselves from their secular trappings, but were not able to do it because of its high price. The building, according to this account, was burnt down during the barbarian sack of 410, and was then sold for a much lower price.<sup>70</sup> Guglielmo Gatti reported traces of destruction by fire on the marble pavement and walls of parts of the house, but we cannot be certain about the historical accuracy of Melania's biography.<sup>71</sup> In any case, the *domus* of the Valerii provide us with a unique example of a property that continued in the hands of one same family for a few generations, as well as of its alienation.<sup>72</sup>

### Houses in context

The *domus* of the Symmachi, of Gaudentius, of the Valerii, and of the Sette Sale are exceptionally well-documented cases for late antique Rome. The architecture of late antique houses has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the last few decades, and examples from all over the empire show characteristics that can also be seen in our Roman cases.<sup>73</sup> These include a wide variety of architectural forms, the great care with the decoration of 'reception areas', the systematic incorporation of previously existing structures (whether domestic or not), and the greater specialization of spaces. One important feature that cannot be properly analysed, for lack of data, is the considerable area occupied by these houses. As mentioned above, the so-called *domus* of the Symmachi, for example, occupied an area of c.6,500–8,500 square metres; it has been suggested that the *domus* on the Sette Sale cistern might have been as large as 5,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and that the total size of the *domus* of the Valerii, leaving enough room for gardens, would have surpassed 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>74</sup> Although we will never be certain about these figures, it is clear that aristocratic *domus* had a great impact on the definition of the appearance and map of the city.

<sup>69</sup> For the Christianization of the house, see Brenk (1999). See also Bowes (2008) 78–82.

<sup>70</sup> *V. Mel. Lat.* 14.2; *V. Mel. Gr.* 14.

<sup>71</sup> Gatti (1902D) 160; he thought that the fire was a result of the Norman invasion in 1084, but this is extremely unlikely: see Colini (1944) 258. See Machado (2012B) 118–19 for a discussion of the evidence and recent bibliography.

<sup>72</sup> Machado (2012B) 115. See, *contra*, Hillner (2003) 140–3.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Baldini Lippolis (2001); see also the studies collected in Lavan, Özgenel, and Sarantis (2007) and, more recently, Bowes (2010).

<sup>74</sup> Suggested by Guidobaldi (1986) 218.

As our examples show, the scale, architecture, and decoration of houses were among the fundamental concerns of late antique owners. This was already the case in the early empire, when there were important developments in the architecture of dining and audience halls, but late antiquity seems to be the crowning phase of such developments, when elements that were previously exclusive to imperial residences were incorporated into the architecture of aristocratic residences.<sup>75</sup> An example of this can be seen in the polygonal room of the Sette Sale house, which, although of uncertain function, was very likely used for 'grander' occasions. This can also be seen in the care with which the apsidal hall of the *domus* of the Symmachi was rebuilt in the fourth century. Houses, especially those of powerful aristocrats, were not strictly private, or domestic spaces.

The examples discussed are limited to the houses of the upper strata of the Roman elite. The size, material, and decoration of these buildings are eloquent indications of the elitist character of these dwellings. They are not less valuable for this reason; they illustrate the upper limits of the possibilities available to members of the aristocracy, even if the reality was much more diverse than that. Being the seat of the Senate and an important governing centre, late antique Rome attracted many ambitious aristocrats at the beginning and at the summit of their careers, which meant that there was a continued demand for suitable dwellings.<sup>76</sup> In fact, being present in the old capital was so important that a senator like Symmachus could opt to spend his periods of retreat in *otium* near the city: his property in the Vatican gave him the opportunity to hide from the urban crowds, and still attend senatorial meetings whenever necessary.<sup>77</sup> The presence of senators and other members of the ruling class had a great impact on the 'housing market', requiring an appropriate supply of aristocratic residences, either to sell or to rent.<sup>78</sup> Senators such as Symmachus owned more than one property in the city, and were aware of their economic value and of the fact that embellishing them was also a way of increasing their value.<sup>79</sup> This is not the place for discussing the economy of late antique Rome's real estate market, but it is important to remember that there was a political dimension to it. This is true not only because resources gathered from selling or renting a property could be spent with political aims in mind, but also because such economic transactions could create personal relationships.

Houses were an important element in the building of social and political networks. This is because they could be visited or frequented by relatives, friends, and clients, but also because their location in relation to the houses of their owners or rivals helped to define the social and political topography of the city. The houses of two political associates like Symmachus and Gaudentius are an example

<sup>75</sup> See especially Ellis (1991) and Bek (1983); see also the classic work of Lavin (1962).

<sup>76</sup> A point stressed by Guidobaldi (1999) 57.

<sup>77</sup> As Symmachus observes in *Ep.* 7.21.

<sup>78</sup> Observed by Guidobaldi (1999) 60–1.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Symmachus' considerations in *Ep.* 5.54 and 5.66.

of such personal and spatial associations. The support offered by family and neighbours to the then prefect Volusianus when his house was under attack confirms this idea.<sup>80</sup> Proximity could also bring risks. A later example is offered by the (certainly fictional) acts of the martyrs Simplicius, Faustinus, and Beatrix: in this case, the latter was denounced as a Christian by a neighbour who was interested in her house.<sup>81</sup> Another type of risk is mentioned in a letter of Symmachus to the influential courtier Eutropius (possibly the author of historical works). Symmachus mentions the concerns of Ausonianus, that Eutropius might be planning to incorporate the otherwise unknown senator's house into his own property.<sup>82</sup> Having a powerful neighbour could be an advantage as well as a source of problems.

### Politics in the domestic space

The existence of mutual influences between 'private' and 'palatial' architecture do not mean that an aristocratic house, even the grandest, was of the same scale as that of the imperial palaces in Constantinople or on the Palatine Hill in Rome. No matter how rich a late Roman *domus* was, it was still very different from the spatial centre of the imperial court. But one should not overemphasize the differences either. 'Houses' and 'palaces' were at different points of one continuous line that characterized the architecture of power. Just as the power of a late Roman senator was of a very different magnitude from that of Roman emperors (or, later, Ostrogothic kings), houses and palaces were political centres of different scales. And yet, just as palaces were used for functions other than domestic, aristocratic *domus* served as spaces for more openly political and public functions too. Vitruvius had already noticed this, when he observed that the houses of noble citizens should be both magnificent and luxurious, '...for [there] both public deliberations and private judgements and arbitrations are often carried out'.<sup>83</sup> Activities that we tend to associate with public life (and, accordingly, spaces seen as public) could therefore also take place in the domestic sphere. The choice of the house of the senator and consul Faustus as a setting for the senatorial meeting in which the Theodosian Code was promulgated, discussed in the previous chapter, is a good case in point. In this instance, a political ceremony celebrating the empire and the imperial power became also a celebration of the individual who

<sup>80</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.3.8; see discussion in the previous chapter, pp. 215–16.

<sup>81</sup> *Acta SS. Simplicii, Faustini et Beatrix* 2 (AASS Iul. VII, p.36). The text was dated to the sixth century by Dufourq (1900) 313–18.

<sup>82</sup> Symm., *Ep.* 3.53. See *PLRE* I, Eutropius 2, on his correspondent. It is not clear whether this house was actually located in Rome.

<sup>83</sup> *De arch.* 6.5.2: '...quod in domibus eorum saepius et publica consilia et privata iudicia arbitriaque conficiuntur'.

hosted it—probably in a reception room appropriately grand, itself decorated in his honour.

The combination of public and personal power was an important element in the workings of late Roman political life, and this was all the more so for the domestic context in which it so often took place. A few of the laws collected in the code brought to Rome by Faustus reinforce this impression and illuminate other important aspects, even if not specific to the *Urbs*. This is seen in two edicts issued by Constantine in 331 to ‘the provincials’, both emphasizing the same basic principles: that officials should conduct hearings and trials in tribunals open to the public, instead of hiding themselves in their own chambers, appearing only to those willing to pay for it.<sup>84</sup> These laws indicate that imperial officials could create difficulties for those who needed or wanted to have access to them by avoiding public spaces, making pecuniary gains from it. Although the Constantinian rulings do not mention the use of domestic spaces, this is explicitly referred to in a law addressed by the emperors Valentinian and Valens to a certain Artemius, possibly *corrector* (governor) *Lucaniae et Brittiorum* in 364. This law established that judges should conduct audiences or pronounce sentences concerning the condition and patrimony of men in the public chambers of the *fora*, with all citizens being invited, instead of in the seclusion of their own houses.<sup>85</sup> Imperial legislation was concerned with making sure that officials used publicly owned buildings such as governors’ palaces, but a law issued by the emperor Leo in 471 insisting that governors should not abandon their official *praetoria* for their houses indicates that this practice remained common.<sup>86</sup> As seen in Chapter 1, different types of space were available for imperial officials in late antique Rome, from *secretaria* to the imposing urban prefecture.<sup>87</sup> Aristocratic houses offered an alternative space for the performance of political activities.

The appropriation of public functions and power in a domestic context is a phenomenon that can be observed in other societies, and an interesting parallel might be drawn with the activities of officials of the late twentieth-century Indian government working at a local, provincial level.<sup>88</sup> In this specific case, a *patwari*—the official responsible for the keeping of land records of villages—in northern India was living in a small house with two rooms and an enclosed courtyard on the ground floor. One of the rooms had a large door opening to the street, and served as his ‘office’: ‘[t]hat is where he was usually to be found, surrounded by clients, sycophants, and colleagues’.<sup>89</sup> The room had two benches placed along the side-walls, where people sat and waited for their cases to be heard. Here, the solution of

<sup>84</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.6–7.

<sup>85</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 1.16.9. See *PLRE* I, Artemius 4.

<sup>86</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 1.40.15. See *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.8 and 15.1.35, for examples of imperial concern; see also Lavan (2001) 43 for discussion.

<sup>87</sup> See p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> Gupta (1995).

<sup>89</sup> Gupta (1995) 379: one wonders if the author read Ammianus’ description of Roman aristocratic houses.

an issue that should be merely bureaucratic became a political negotiation. The presentation of the 'case' by the petitioners was followed by the official's account of all the political and administrative difficulties that he would have to face in handling it. The solution of such difficulties involved retiring to the other, more reserved room, where proper negotiations could take place, and a 'retribution' could be paid by the petitioner for the 'especial effort' required by his case. We should not let moral inclinations obscure the essence of such a practice. For the petitioner, it was important to 'get things done', whereas for the official, a representative of the state's power, the performance of a public function was also a way of making personal gains. This example is important to remind us that even in contemporary societies with stable democratic governments the state is perceived locally through personal—as well as institutional—contacts.

This example suggests one possible use for the rooms surrounding main reception halls in senatorial houses, such as in the house of the Symmachi (Fig. 7.5: R and S) discussed above (pp. 243–6). This would also help to explain why houses became so associated with personal power, and in this sense the popular attacks against the houses of urban prefects in fourth-century Rome, such as those narrated by Ammianus, gain a new dimension.<sup>90</sup> The later Roman empire cannot be equated with the modern Indian state, and we must be careful when establishing parallels between late antique Rome and modern cities, but examples are important for establishing differences too. Whereas in the Indian case this type of interaction seems to be more explicit in the lower and more peripheral levels of government, and the population has access to different instruments of political pressure, including the press, the impression we have from late Roman imperial legislation is that highly placed officials were openly involved in such practices. Charging for service was a structural feature of the late Roman state and its officials, as Christopher Kelly showed, but the use of houses as venues for the performance of public functions might have offered further possibilities for increasing one's social and economic capital.<sup>91</sup> Another important difference is related to the setting of such dealings: the reception halls of late antique *domus* were spaces in which both architecture and decoration created a very specific context for these activities. They stressed the idea that Roman aristocrats were men of a different nature, 'beyond mortality', and this contrasts with the much humbler setting of the modern Indian official.<sup>92</sup> As legislation suggests for the case of provinces,<sup>93</sup> aristocrats performed their official functions in their private and domestic spaces (which the laws tried to prevent) as well as in publicly owned buildings, and this emphasized the identification between public and personal power.

<sup>90</sup> Gupta (1995) 383 observes that a common form of protest in India is to camp in front of an official's house, preventing his movements.

<sup>91</sup> Kelly (2004) 138–85 is a wide-ranging discussion of these issues.

<sup>92</sup> As observed by Ammianus: 28.4.12.

<sup>93</sup> See Lavan (2001) 43 for the evidence.



Houses could also be used for more day-to-day political and public functions. Macrobius reminds us, in the *Saturnalia*, that domestic space was used for work, as well as for lighter activities. When visiting Postumianus, the narrator of the conversations held at Praetextatus' house, Decius observes that the eminent lawyer was constantly busy with his clients' affairs, *in foro vel domi*.<sup>94</sup> Postumianus himself explained his refusal to attend the invitation to Praetextatus' house by observing that he would have to spend the holidays examining friends' cases, most likely at home.<sup>95</sup> Although Macrobius was referring to a particularly eminent lawyer, a friend of Symmachus and Libanius, the fact that he appears in the poem in such a way suggests that the readers of the work would have recognized such behaviour. Domestic spaces were also used for what Macrobius called 'weightier discussions' between friends, and we must be aware of the possible meanings of such a reference.<sup>96</sup> In the narrative, it is said that when entering Praetextatus' house without an invitation, Evangelus implied that a gathering of such important guests might have been discussing important secret issues—a possibility that Praetextatus denied immediately.<sup>97</sup> Houses offered a variety of spaces that could be used according to one's needs. This is illustrated by the narrative of the deposition of bishop Silverius (536) by the Byzantine general Belisarius and his wife, Antonina, during a meeting held at the *domus Pinciana*, preserved in the *Liber pontificalis*:

He [Belisarius] had the blessed pope Silverius come to him at the Pincian Palace, and he made all the clergy wait at the first and second curtains. On Silverius' entry with Vigilius alone into the inner chamber, the patrician Antonina was lying on a couch with the patrician Belisarius sitting at her feet. When Antonina saw him she said to him: 'Tell us, lord pope Silverius, what have we done to you and the Romans to make you want to betray us into the hands of the Goths?' While she was still speaking, John, Regionary subdeacon of the first region, came in, took the *pallium* from his neck and led him into a side room. He stripped him, dressed him in a monk's habit and hid him away. Then Sixtus, Regionary subdeacon of the sixth region, seeing him now as a monk, came out and announced to the clergy that the lord pope had been deposed and had become a monk. On hearing this they all fled.<sup>98</sup>

The way in which different interconnected rooms are articulated through passageways and curtains, creating a hierarchy between those directly involved and those who waited on the unfolding of the events illustrates the usefulness of houses (and palaces) as political spaces. The *domus Pinciana* was built in the

<sup>94</sup> *Sat.* 1.2.1; on Postumianus, see *PLRE* I, Postumianus 3.

<sup>95</sup> *Sat.* 1.2.6.

<sup>96</sup> 'Robustior disputatio': *Sat.* 1.1.4.

<sup>97</sup> *Sat.* 1.7.4–6.

<sup>98</sup> *Lib. pont.* I, 292–3 (transl. Davis).

area of the late Republican *Horti Lucullani*, where the emperor Aurelian is said to have enjoyed residing while in Rome.<sup>99</sup> It belonged to Sextus Petronius Probus in the late fourth century, and it was used by the imperial court in the fifth, before being adopted by Belisarius as residence during the Byzantine occupation of Rome.<sup>100</sup> As such, it represents the summation of the possibilities offered by domestic structures for political activities.

Private spaces were sought by different Christian groups for their meetings, trying to evade the vigilance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the imperial government.<sup>101</sup> The protection offered by walls, thresholds, and curtains, the fact that only authorized people had access to this space, and the possibility of meeting friends of similar inclinations, opinions, and ambitions made domestic space an ideal setting for conspiracies and political plots. Those issues that senators could not discuss in the *Curia* could be agreed upon in private libraries and dining halls. Two laws issued by Constantine in 319 and 320 reveal a similar concern, forbidding *haruspices* and priests from entering houses, even with the excuse of friendship. An offending house-owner could have his property confiscated and even be sentenced to death.<sup>102</sup> The issue was not in the performance of pagan practices, but in the secrecy with which they were performed. In fact, these same laws observe that such practices remained legal, as long as they took place at public altars and shrines. Legislation against divination in private context was not something new in the fourth century, and earlier emperors like Tiberius revealed an exaggerated concern with such activities.<sup>103</sup> At the core of such preoccupations was not only the personal safety of the emperor and of agents of the state, but also the political ambitions of the people involved.<sup>104</sup> The violent trials of senators conducted in Rome by Maximinus, first as *praefectus annonae* and then as *vicarius urbis*, during the later part of Valentinian I's reign, were motivated by charges concerning magical practices and adultery, directly linked to domestic contexts.<sup>105</sup>

The possibility of using houses for political or official functions was an important element in the way Roman political life was experienced by contemporaries. It was a very clear sign of the appropriation of public powers by influential aristocrats, and in this sense the house might be seen as one of the arenas where 'public' and 'private' were defined. The use of houses for conspiracies, and the government's threat to confiscate them were the most explicit aspects of this process. If the *domus*

<sup>99</sup> SHA, *Aur.* 49.1; see also Guidobaldi (2004).

<sup>100</sup> See, for the history of the complex, Guidobaldi and Jolivet (1995) and Broise, Dewailly, and Jolivet (2000).

<sup>101</sup> See, for heretics, Aug., *Conf.* 5.10; Aug., *De mor. manich.* 20.74; Socrat., *HE* 7.11; see also above, p. 176. For political activities and the imperial government, see *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.18, 20, 34, and 40.

<sup>102</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 9.16.1–2.

<sup>103</sup> Suet., *Tiberius* 63.

<sup>104</sup> An aspect that is well explored in Curran (2000) 173.

<sup>105</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.1–57. For the political context, see Matthews (1990) 56–60, who although denying the existence of an actual conspiracy shows the political consequences of these trials. See also Lizzi Testa (2004) 11–27.

was the centre and symbol of aristocratic power, house-owners had to interact with other agents and institutions in the political scene, most notably the imperial court and the imperial state. The dynamics that shaped late antique Rome's political life and urban space were to a large extent a product of this tension between senatorial power-houses and imperial rule. *Domus* were private spaces, in the sense that they were physically separated (or perhaps we should say isolated) from the surrounding area and that they belonged to someone. They were also the spaces where an aristocrat could more effectively shield himself and his relationships from the agents of the state. This is clearly demonstrated by the use of houses as places of refuge. Ammianus' narrative of the political persecutions that took place in Rome in the late 360s highlights the terror in which those senators who were considered suspects were immersed. In that context, it was in a private house that the aristocrat Abienus tried to hide himself from the wrath of Maximinus, the official in charge of the investigations, and his agents.<sup>106</sup> Symmachus complained, in one of his *Relationes*, of the actions of the *vir clarissimus* Fulgentius, who seized an imperial official detained by the urban prefect for questioning. The official, Felix, was taken to the house of Fulgentius, who refused to hand him over to the officials of the prefecture, openly defying Symmachus' authority as the emperor's highest official in the city.<sup>107</sup> The use of domestic space as sanctuary can also be seen in the narratives of the late antique and early medieval acts of martyrs from Rome.<sup>108</sup>

Emperors and their representatives could resort to the use of force to enter such spaces and achieve their aims. Iulius Festus Hymetius, for example, was accused of treason because of the secret papers that were confiscated by force in his house, whereas at approximately the same time the former *vicarius urbis Romae*, Aginatus, was found and kept under guard in his own *villa*.<sup>109</sup> Public authorities also tried to gain access to the secret recesses of *domus* by subtler ways. According to Ammianus, the Caesar Constantius Gallus made extensive use of spies, disguised as clients, to enter the house of the wealthy in Antioch.<sup>110</sup> The same is said of earlier emperors, in Rome and elsewhere.<sup>111</sup> In very different circumstances, Damasus was accused of invading, assisted by 'officials', the house where his rival Macarius kept vigil, from where the bishop expelled his adversary's followers.<sup>112</sup> The acts of martyrs, even if largely fictional, also attest to these conflicts. Here we see Christians being put to the test, arrested, and even executed in their houses.<sup>113</sup> The collaboration of domestic informers could also be sought, a practice that was

<sup>106</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.48–9. <sup>107</sup> Symm., *Rel.* 23.8–10.

<sup>108</sup> e.g. *Acta S. Abundii* 2 (AASS Sept. V, p. 300); *Acta S. Pimenii* 3 (Delehaye (1936) 260).

<sup>109</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.1.20 (for Hymetius) and 28.1.54 (for Aginatus).

<sup>110</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.1.6–7.

<sup>111</sup> See *SHA, Hadr.* 11.4.

<sup>112</sup> *Lib. precum* 79–80.

<sup>113</sup> Respectively: *Acta S. Susannae* 4 (AASS Aug. II, p. 632); *Acta SS. Iohannis et Pauli* 3 (AASS Iun. V, p. 160); *Acta S. Caeciliae* 31 (Delehaye (1936) 219).

particularly feared and hated by Roman senators, who went as far as mentioning it in their acclamations.<sup>114</sup>

The most explicit form of action, however, was the confiscation of private property, a threat that constantly appears in late imperial legislation. This had been common practice since Republican times—the house of Cicero on the Palatine being an example—but it is revealing that, from a senatorial perspective, abuses of such practice came to be seen as marks of ‘bad emperors’.<sup>115</sup> An interesting case is mentioned by Symmachus in two of his letters, concerning events related to his property in Ostia.<sup>116</sup> The famous orator and senator mentioned the house on a number of occasions,<sup>117</sup> but in this case it was to complain about the presence of imperial troops lodged there. The obligation of house-owners to host imperial troops and officials was well established in the legislation, but it is the likely context in which these letters were written that make them relevant to us. They are datable to 388, when after the defeat of the attempted usurpation of Maximus, Symmachus (one of his supporters) fell into temporary political disgrace.<sup>118</sup> The house in question was later returned to Symmachus, and we know that he kept retiring to it and receiving visitors until much later in his life.<sup>119</sup> What this case illustrates is the possibility of the imperial power attacking and punishing senators through their houses, in Rome and elsewhere.

### Conclusion: Divergent Destinies

From the late third century onwards, as the administration of the city was reformed and the local aristocracy reasserted its position and ambitions in the city and before the imperial court, the number of aristocratic houses in Rome grew and their impact on the urban fabric became more poignant than ever. Senatorial residences incorporated public spaces and previously existing structures (public and private), just as their owners asserted their influence over governmental institutions and the population of the city. As a result, these magnificent domestic complexes came to fulfil old and new functions, expressing the complex relationship between public and private power that characterized life in late antique Rome. The houses of the elite offer, in this sense, a clear indication of the close links between personal power and life in the *Urbs*. They were one of the defining characteristics of the late antique city of Rome.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, the acclamations that followed the death of Commodus as reported in the *Historia Augusta*: *SHA, Comm.* 18.5–6 and 19.7. This is also found in *Gesta senatus* 5. For an example of the action of informers in Rome, see *Amm. Marc.* 28.1.49.

<sup>115</sup> Evidence and discussion in Millar (1977) 163–74.

<sup>116</sup> Mentioned in *Ep.* 2.52 and 6.72.

<sup>117</sup> *Ep.* 1.6; 6.8; 6.47.

<sup>118</sup> See Roda (1987) for a discussion of these letters and of the legislation concerning property owners’ obligation to host imperial officials and troops. *Symm., Ep.* 9.48 deals with a similar problem, but in a different context.

<sup>119</sup> As in *Ep.* 6.47, datable to 397.

The golden days of the aristocratic power-house did not last long, however. In contrast with the fourth century, there is no evidence for major restorations or renewal of *domus* after the beginning of the fifth century, indicating that the expansion of Rome's housing market had ended. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case, as this period was marked by a growth in the number of documented cases of (partial or complete) abandonment of domestic structures. The splendid *domus* of the Valerii was destroyed by fire at the beginning of the fifth century, possibly during the sack of the city in 410.<sup>120</sup> Regardless of whether it was destroyed by looting invaders or not, the building was never restored.<sup>121</sup> On the slope of the Aventine, a group of structures identified as part of a *domus* with late imperial phases (the so-called *domus Parthorum*), also show signs of damage by fire around the same date.<sup>122</sup> The house was not abandoned in its entirety. Its apsidal hall shows no sign of damage or abandonment until the beginning of the sixth century, when the whole complex was covered with earth and rubble.<sup>123</sup> In the area of the Conservatorio di San Pasquale in Baylon, Trastevere, the work for the conversion of an *insula* into a *domus* with an apsidal hall was interrupted, and the structure was abandoned. The stratigraphic analysis of the building revealed that here, too, the process started in the first decades of the fifth century.<sup>124</sup> On the Caelian, discarded ceramic material indicates that the houses of Gaudentius and of the Symmachi were also abandoned (at least in part, in the case of the latter) in the course of the century.<sup>125</sup>

The process of abandonment of aristocratic *domus* that started in the early fifth century was both general and irreversible. It can be observed in different parts of the city, and even the houses that were later refurbished were of a different size and nature. This is well illustrated by the once wealthy residence excavated near Termini train station, on the Viminal (Fig. 7.8: A).<sup>126</sup> Brick-stamps date the building of the *domus* to the second century, contemporary to the bathing complex next to it (Fig. 7.8: B). Some time between the late fifth and the early sixth century, a wall was built dividing the humbler part of the house from the grander area, and the latter was buried after having been despoiled of its decoration.<sup>127</sup> The new residential area was much humbler and

<sup>120</sup> As suggested by *V. Mel. Gr.* 14; *V. Mel. Lat.* 14.

<sup>121</sup> Until the foundation of the monastery of S. Erasmo in the late sixth century; see Colini (1944) 258 and Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004) 154–5.

<sup>122</sup> A nymphaeum was blocked with fragments of the walls of the ruined building, and parts of the house were spoliated. See Manciola, Ceccherelli, and Santangeli Valenzani (1993) 56.

<sup>123</sup> Manciola, Ceccherelli, and Santangeli Valenzani (1993) 56.

<sup>124</sup> See Fogagnolo (2013) 157–8.

<sup>125</sup> For the house of Gaudentius (mid-fifth century) see Spinola, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 482, n. 131; for the house of the Symmachi, see Carignani, in Pavolini et al. (1993) 494. For a discussion of the area and its abandonment during this period, see Pavolini (2013).

<sup>126</sup> See Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996B).

<sup>127</sup> Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996B) 172–3. See also Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996A) 66. The dating of the wall is suggested by the style of the *opus vittatum*, similar to more firmly dated structures in Largo Argentina and near the Arch of Titus.



Fig. 7.8. The *domus* of Piazza dei Cinquecento.

From R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani, 'Episodi di trasformazione del paesaggio urbano nella Roma altomedievale attraverso l'analisi di due contesti: un isolato in Piazza dei Cinquecento e l'area dei Fori Imperiali', *Archeologia Medievale* 23, 1996, p. 57, fig. 3, with the author's kind permission.

poorer, arranged around a courtyard (Fig. 7.8: XIV) and partially decorated with frescoes. The rooms on the upper storey were also rearranged, indicating that the owners were still investing in it—even if in a much less ambitious scale.<sup>128</sup> Whatever the functions performed in the house, or the identity of its occupants, this was a very

<sup>128</sup> Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (1996B) 173–5.

different type of structure, which was finally abandoned in the later sixth century.<sup>129</sup> This was not just the physical adaptation of a house into a smaller architectural unit, but a process of change in the social group that once inhabited and frequented it. As the social and economic outlook of Rome and its aristocracy changed, from the beginning of the fourth century onwards, so did the visibility and prominence of the *domus* in the city space.

The widespread abandonment of aristocratic houses was contemporary with the growth in the number of properties being transferred to the patrimony of the Church. As we saw in Chapter 5, the donation of urban properties for the construction and endowment of titular churches and basilicas was an important element in the relationship between members of the elite and their bishops, and this practice was a key factor in the Christianization of the *Urbs*. The *Liber pontificalis* records that Vestina donated five houses in Rome to the *titulus* founded at her request, and the Basilica of S. Maria Maggiore was endowed with three houses—one of which, the *domus Palmati*, had one of the highest revenues of all properties listed in these papal biographies.<sup>130</sup> Not all Christian families agreed with this practice, and not all of them were fully committed to it. Melania and her husband Pinianus, for example, faced opposition from their relatives as well as from other senators when they tried to sell their properties so as to embrace an ascetic life.<sup>131</sup> For families of the Roman elite, the transfer of properties to the Church contained in itself a social and economic contradiction that threatened their very survival as a social group. This is well expressed in a sarcastic remark of Jerome, directed against young widows who preferred to marry for a second time in order to protect their properties, instead of embarking on an ascetic life and donating their properties:

Young widows...generally make excuses such as these: 'My little patrimony decreases daily, the property I inherited is being dissipated, a servant has spoken insultingly to me, a maid has neglected my orders. Who will appear for me before the authorities? Who will be responsible for the rents of my estates? Who will see to the education of my children? Who will bring up my slaves?' Thus, shameful to say, they put forward as a reason for marrying again, which alone should deter them from so doing.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> See Machado (2012B) 121–2.

<sup>130</sup> *Titulus Vestinae*: *Lib. pont.* I, 220–2; S. Maria Maggiore: *Lib. pont.* I, 232–3. The *domus Palmati* brought a revenue of 154 *solidi* and 3 *siliquae*. See Guidobaldi (1995B) 151–2.

<sup>131</sup> *V. Mel. Gr.* 14; *V. Mel. Lat.* 14.

<sup>132</sup> *Ep.* 54.15: 'Solent adolescentulae viduae...dicere: "Patrimonium meum cottidie perit, maiorum hereditas dissipatur, servus contumeliose locutus est, imperium ancilla neglexit. Quis procedet ad publicum? Quis respondebit pro agrorum tributis? Parvulos meos quis erudiet? Vernulas quis educabit?" Et hanc - pro nefas! - causam opponunt matrimonii, quae vel sola debuit nuptias impedit.' See Machado (2012B) 128–9.

Donations to the Church enhanced the social standing of aristocratic patrons, consolidating their position in the Christian community and saving their souls; at the same time, they also eroded part of the basis of their dominance over the city and its population: their *domus*.

Although the conditions faced by members of the Roman senatorial aristocracy were very different in the fifth century from those in which they lived in the fourth, this does not mean that all houses were either abandoned or turned into churches. The house of Faustus that was used for the senatorial meeting of 438 is an example, as are those houses that only passed into the hands of the Church at later dates. Even in a context of impoverishment and decay of the urban fabric, we can still observe the continuity of residential models.<sup>133</sup> The fact that the *Liber pontificalis* records the revenues provided by so many of the properties that passed into the hands of the Church indicates that they were still used as residences, most likely rented by members of the Roman elite. In spite of all the *domus* destroyed, abandoned, and donated, it is clear that these aristocratic dwellings continued to play a significant role in the city's topography of power, well into the sixth century. It is also true, however, that by that date the Roman Church was beyond doubt the most important house-owner in the *Urbs*. It is not a coincidence that so many of the letters of bishop Gregory I (590–604), for example, are concerned with the physical condition, management, and use of these buildings in Rome and elsewhere in Italy.<sup>134</sup> By the end of the late antique period, one power-house dominated all the others in Rome—the episcopal palace in the Lateran.

<sup>133</sup> As suggested by Santangeli Valenzani (2000B) 103.

<sup>134</sup> e.g. Greg. I, *Ep.* 3.17 and 58; 4.8, 10, and 19; 5.50; 6.42; 8.5 and 12; 9.54, 137, and 166; 10.18; 14.3. See Machado (2012B) 126–8.



# Conclusion

This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.<sup>1</sup>

Between the end of the third and the beginning of the sixth century, the city of Rome was progressively appropriated by its senatorial aristocracy. To an extent unparalleled since the end of the Republic, the old imperial capital and its spaces were incorporated into the strategies adopted by members of the Roman elite, turned into means for the preservation of a highly unequal social order. The municipal administration, the imperial services that provided for its populace, its festivals, and religious life were all part of this process. Rome's urban space was redefined in its appearance, meaning, and use; its houses, streets, and monuments served both as arenas where social hierarchies were engendered and as stages where they were displayed. This process was never complete: senators remained subjects of imperial (and later royal) rule, having to deal with the growing authority of bishops and the frequently rebellious populace of the city. And yet, the history of the *Urbs* in late antiquity was inextricably linked to that of its most powerful residents. To paraphrase Italo Calvino's Marco Polo, theirs were the desires that gave form to it, and theirs were the desires that eventually came to erase it.

This contradiction was noticed by contemporaries. In a letter addressed to the young Pacatula, Jerome painted a bleak picture of life after the sack of Rome in 410:

Oh horror! The world is falling into ruins, and yet sins do not decline among us. The famous *Urbs* and capital of the Roman empire was swallowed by fire. There is no region of the world without those exiled from Rome. Churches held as sacred have fallen into dust and ashes, but we are devoted to avarice; we live as though we will die the following day, but build as if we were going to live forever.

<sup>1</sup> Calvino (1997) 30.

Gold shines on our walls; gold shines on our ceilings; gold shines on the capitals of our columns; and naked and hungry Christ dies in the form of his poor, in front of our doors.<sup>2</sup>

Jerome received news of the sack while living in Bethlehem. His information about the city and the terrible events that took place there were brought by friends and travellers, and his account was aimed at instructing Pacatula into the principles and rewards of an ascetic life.<sup>3</sup> It was not, in any way, intended as an accurate depiction. In spite of this, his letter throws light on some of the elements that shaped Roman society and urban space in late antiquity. As he noticed, there was a close link between private (and public) building, personal power, and self-display. The contrast between the rich interior of houses and the suffering of the poor dying outside was not just an indictment of social inequality, but also a statement of how spatial arrangements—in this case a threshold—could contribute to it. More crucially, aristocratic forms of social investment did not always coincide with what others considered good for the city. In the view of the Christian moralist and ascetic teacher, the contradictions that marked life in Rome were an expression of its sinful elite.

There were significant continuities between Roman society, as described by Jerome, and that of earlier periods. Aristocrats had traditionally taken every opportunity to make gains from public works, used their houses as a symbol of their standing and power, and treated civic magistracies as a form of social advancement. And yet, late antique Rome was a very different city from that of the early empire. All around the Mediterranean, cities and urban communities experienced profound changes from the end of the third century onwards, a process that involved their social, political, religious, and physical makeup.<sup>4</sup> Rome too was subject to these broader transformations, but here (more than anywhere else) empire-wide trends were largely shaped by the priorities of its ruling group. Paradoxically, it was the political and administrative reforms aiming at centralizing the government of the empire, implemented from the late third century onwards, that made the rise of senatorial Rome possible.

By expanding the powers and functions of the urban prefecture, emperors delegated great control over the city and its inhabitants to members of the aristocracy. Rather than contradicting imperial power, members of the local elite acted as its operatives on the ground—a position that, as much as personal

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 128.5: 'Pro nefas, orbis terrarum ruit, in nobis peccata non corrunt. Urbs inclita et Romani imperii caput, uno hausta est incendio. Nulla regio, quae non exules eius habeat. In cineres ac favillas sacrae quondam ecclesiae conciderunt, et tamen studemus avaritiae. Vivimus quasi altera die morituri, et aedificamus quasi semper in hoc victuri saeculo. Auro parietes, auro laquearia, auro fulgent capita columnarum, et nudus atque esuriens ante fores nostras in paupere Christus moritur.'

<sup>3</sup> See, on this letter and its context, Rebenich (1992) 201–3. For Pacatula, see also *PLRE* II, Pacatula.

<sup>4</sup> The classic description is Jones (1964) 712–66; see Ward-Perkins (1998) for a useful survey, and Liebeschuetz (2001) and Krause and Witschel (2006) for more in-depth studies.

wealth and family prestige, became a source of their power. The structures associated with the Praefectura Urbana on the Velia and the prefectorial *secretaria* scattered across the city were a powerful reminder of the existence of the imperial government and of the reach of its rule. At the same time, the assertion of personal and official power (frequently combined) at the level of local neighbourhoods (*vici*) and of the regions of the city indicate the increasing importance of centrifugal forces in the making of Rome's urban space.<sup>5</sup> As we saw in Chapter 1, the administrative map of the city might still have had a clear 'centre', in the sense of a *locus* of symbolic, bureaucratic, and political power, but it was increasingly defined by the existence of smaller units, where different social hierarchies and dynamics were prevalent—and the city's elite played a key role in this process.

For most of our period, Rome retained the status of imperial capital. Emperors like Aurelian and Constantine maintained a close relationship with the city and its population, sponsoring impressive building projects and expanding the imperial services in the city. Although never with the same intensity, later emperors continued to favour the *Urbs*, even when living far from it. Roman aristocrats of varying fortune and standing took part in this process, occupying administrative positions, participating in imperial celebrations, and overseeing works that commemorated the central rulers. By doing it, they reminded contemporaries of their own exceptional standing. This process redefined not only the city's political geography, but also the topographical arrangement of the spaces connected with the survival of the *populus Romanus*. Broader empire-wide economic trends played an important role in these developments: the substitution of grain by bread led to the decentralization of the *annona*, and the diversion of Egyptian grain to Constantinople exposed the city to greater economic and social pressure. In this context, Roman aristocrats were able to expand their networks of clients among associations in the *Urbs* and in the regions associated with its supply, as well as among larger segments of Roman society, playing an increased role in a service that had for centuries been a distinguishing marker of Roman citizenship. The small *fora*, *horrea*, and *gradus* of the city were the *locus* where this 'capture' was made both visible and real.

Aristocratic strategies were a defining element in late Roman efforts to restore and maintain the city's urban fabric, controlling not only its physical condition and appearance, but also the social and economic relations that produced it. Scholars of late antique Rome are not in a position to analyse the production of urban space in terms of the rentability of property or the financial strategies of building developers as modern geographers do. But, as we saw in Chapter 2, it is clear that the imposition of a specific late antique and aristocratic order played a crucial role in the composition of the social and economic capital of the late

<sup>5</sup> Carandini (1993) 29 describes the evolution from the classical to the early medieval city as a process of loss in 'functional organicity'; we should think of new, 'polycentric organicities' instead.

Roman elite. Although the state of the evidence makes the identification of changes over time difficult, the information available suggests that the passing of time was marked by an ever larger involvement of senators in the process of reshaping the physical city, a trend that was already noticeable by the middle of the fourth century.

It was in this Rome in transformation that aristocrats celebrated their power with magnificent public appearances. Emperors still performed processions and festivals in the *Urbs*, and monuments like statues and arches still celebrated the ruling power (albeit in smaller numbers).<sup>6</sup> The stage for these occasions was not the imperial capital of Trajanic times, however, but a very different city. Even the Forum, the traditional civic centre, acquired clear aristocratic overtones from the last decades of the fourth century onwards, as we saw in Chapter 3. In a sense, the *forum Romanum* continued to serve its historic function of ‘topographical mirror of the constitution’,<sup>7</sup> exposing to frequenters both the realities and the ideological trappings of the new social order. As discussed in Chapter 4, aristocrats celebrated the city and its traditions while turning every occasion in its festive and religious calendar to advertise their achievements and family links, whether by dedicating honorific statues or by occupying prominent positions in funerary complexes and Christian basilicas. By that stage, their *domus* had become an established feature of the city’s topography of power. Houses invaded the city plan, converting previously existing structures into domestic spaces and changing the street system of entire neighbourhoods, attracting dependents and friends and serving important official functions. Houses were also legitimate *foci* of religious interaction: pagan shrines and Christian chapels offered the opportunity for the display and assertion of aristocratic traditions and influence over laic and clerical clients, as we saw in Chapter 5. Aristocratic *domus* confirmed the importance of local, neighbourhood-based relations in the ways late antique Romans experienced the space of their city. Not all senators were able to promote themselves and their own interests in the same way: personal wealth, family connections, and political success (the latter dependent on the court) were the key elements that differentiated the more successful aristocrats from their peers.

The senatorial appropriation of Rome’s urban space culminated in the first half of the fifth century. The promulgation of the Theodosian Code in the house of the former urban prefect and consul Faustus in 438, in the presence of the whole Senate, is the most eloquent indication of how successful an aristocrat could be in this respect. Although spending longer periods in the old capital than anytime in the fourth century, the imperial court did not interrupt this trend. Their hold on the throne was less stable, and the tax base that supported their rule was much smaller than that of their fourth-century predecessors. Emperors were, as a result,

<sup>6</sup> Machado with Lenaghan (2016) 125.

<sup>7</sup> As put by Purcell (1995) 326, with regards to the Republican period.

more reliant on the armies led by men like Aetius and Ricimer—but also on the Roman elite.<sup>8</sup> As a result, aristocratic hold over the city and its spaces grew stronger. This is indicated by the increased senatorial character given to the Roman Forum during this period, but also by the more intimate involvement of aristocratic patrons in the life of the Christian community, founding *tituli* and sponsoring the cult of martyrs. The best illustration of this increased presence in the cityscape are the small aristocratic *fora* founded and embellished in this period: Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus dedicated statues to his relatives in the forum established by his father in the Campus Martius, as we saw above;<sup>9</sup> another such square was founded near San Clemente, by Petronius Maximus;<sup>10</sup> the same type of space was established on the Esquiline by Flavius Eurycles Epityncanus in 450, probably on the site of the earlier Forum Esquilinum (Map 1: 13, 23, and 28).<sup>11</sup> These were alternative spatial centres, aimed at a more specific and limited community (the inhabitants and frequenters of one same neighbourhood), which served as a ‘personal’ counterpart to the by now more aristocratic Roman Forum. This was not a usurpation of imperial prerogatives. Epityncanus celebrated his works while urban prefect, and Maximus dedicated a statue of Valentinian III in his forum, reminding us that as late as the mid-fifth century, senators were still aware of the importance of their imperial rulers.<sup>12</sup> Roman aristocrats were thus able to claim a dominant role in city life, identifying themselves with the city, its spaces, and its traditions.

### Rome in Transition

The heyday of senatorial Rome did not last long. In the changing context of the fifth- and sixth-century West, the contradictions inherent to aristocratic dominance became too clear. The Roman aristocracy of the time of Valentinian III was undergoing profound transformations. The presence of the imperial court in the middle of the fifth century brought an influx of new aristocrats—the generation of Sidonius Apollinaris being a good case in point—but the adoption of Ravenna as the Ostrogothic capital and the later collapse of the Theoderician regime put an end to this renovation.<sup>13</sup> The political fragmentation of the western empire limited senatorial economic horizons to Italy, an area that suffered during the turmoil of the fifth, and that would be badly affected during the Byzantine wars. Although

<sup>8</sup> See Matthews (1990) 376–8; this process was analysed by McEvoy (2010) 171–5.

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 49–50 and 73–4. See Bauer (1997) for a discussion of these spaces.

<sup>10</sup> *CIL* VI, 1197 = *EDR* 112717; for the statue, see *CIL* VI, 1198 = *LSA* 1312 (a statue of Valentinian III), datable to 443–5.

<sup>11</sup> *CIL* VI, 1662 = *LSA* 1349 and *CIL* VI, 31888 = *LSA* 1534.

<sup>12</sup> See Humphries (2012) for the impact of Valentinian III on Rome.

<sup>13</sup> See Harries (1994) 141–50 for Sidonius’ move to Rome; see also Bjornlie (2013) 127–44 for the Ostrogothic period, and T. S. Brown (1984) 21–37 for what followed.

much more diverse and dynamic than previously thought, this group was marked by starker social differences, while more local in its origin and ambitions. The rising elites of the peninsula moved elsewhere, either north or east.<sup>14</sup> Great houses still dominated Roman politics, but these were fewer in number and more distant (socially and economically) from the remainder of the *ordo*.

As the senatorial aristocracy changed, so did its relationship with the *Urbs*. The new realities faced by the imperial administration meant that the funds available to prefects and their officials were severely restricted. The evidence for restorations and new construction works decreased steadily from the beginning of the fifth century onwards, especially after the reign of Valentinian III.<sup>15</sup> Important initiatives were still celebrated in inscriptions, such as the restoration of the Colosseum by Basilius, in 484, but these were exceptional occasions.<sup>16</sup> Whether the decline in the number of inscriptions corresponds to a smaller number of works or not, it is still true that senators—even prefects—did not claim responsibility for preserving Rome's past glories as often as they had done in the previous decades. After the end of the Gothic wars, the few public works eventually carried out would be supervised by representatives of the Byzantine administration.<sup>17</sup> Senatorial efforts were now directed to a new type of public building, associated with a different institution, the Church. The *Liber pontificalis* records the continued flow of donations to the episcopal treasury, from chandeliers and arches to crosses, in bronze, silver, and gold—wealth transferred to the hands of a different social and political group.

The most eloquent indication of a new relationship between the senatorial elite and the city's urban space is provided by the fate of their *domus*, discussed in Chapter 7. In spite of Jerome's bitter comments about the splendour of Roman houses after 410, the lack of archaeological evidence for new or restored structures suggests otherwise. Although aristocrats still lived in great luxury decorating and refurbishing their houses according to their needs—the patrician Symmachus was praised by Theoderic precisely for this reason—it is clear that the fourth-century boom of the housing market was over.<sup>18</sup> Instead, houses were either completely or partially abandoned and adapted to new forms of use, indicating that new forms of social interaction were now taking place in domestic spaces.<sup>19</sup> In this context, the donation of houses to the Church, whilst bringing prestige and spiritual rewards, contributed to the erosion of the social base that had made aristocratic power such

<sup>14</sup> See Cameron (2012) for a clear exposition and criticism of previous views; also Machado (2013) and, for a later period, Marconi (2013).

<sup>15</sup> See Humphries (2012) 170–4, for the exceptional character of Valentinian's reign in this respect. See the considerations of Orlandi, Panciera, and Virgili (2006), publishing *AE* 2006, 187 = *EDR* 033301.

<sup>16</sup> A point made by Ward-Perkins (1984) 45–8.

<sup>17</sup> See Coates-Stephens (2006), for a discussion of Byzantine works in Rome.

<sup>18</sup> Cass., *Var.* 4.51; see above, p. 62, for this letter. For the contraction of the housing market, see Guidobaldi (1999) 66.

<sup>19</sup> A process analysed in detail in Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004) 31–51.

a conspicuous element in the map and life of the city. More than just property, senators like the *inlustris femina* Vestina transferred social capital to their bishop, as seen in Chapter 5.

Be it through its governments, festivals, or social relations, the senatorial aristocracy played a defining role in the social life of late antique Rome. The city, with its buildings and spaces, was a crucial element in this process, both a product and a producer of this social order. Writing in the final years of the sixth century, bishop Gregory I lamented, to his congregation, the fate of the former mistress of the world. 'Where is the Senate?', he asked, 'Where is the *populus*? The bones have been wasted away, the flesh has been consumed, all the secular order of dignities is extinct.'<sup>20</sup> These were, to a large extent, rhetorical questions. The Senate and its members were still active at the time of Gregory: his was an aristocratic family (possibly related to the Anicii), and Gregory himself is attested as urban prefect in 573, some twenty years before reading his *Homily on Ezechiel*.<sup>21</sup> Senators were gathered with his clergy a few years later, in 603, when he received the insignia of the emperor Phocas and his wife Leontia, in a ceremony convened at the episcopal complex at the Lateran.<sup>22</sup> The Curia would remain a senatorial space until the episcopate of Honorius I (625–38), when it was converted into the Church of S. Adriano.<sup>23</sup> But the bishop's words resonated among his audience precisely because they knew that the aristocracy that had left such a powerful mark in the city was not the same. The Rome of Gregory the Great remained an impressive city, a symbol of power in its own right, furnished with splendid churches and glorious (if somewhat decayed) ancient monuments. It was a different city, led by a new type of leadership; a city in which the old Roman elite, in spite of its prestige and its claims to greatness, played a much smaller role.

<sup>20</sup> Greg. I., *In Ezech.* 2.6.22: 'Ubi enim senatus? Ubi iam populus? Contabuerunt ossa, consumptae sunt carnes, omnis in ea saecularium dignitatum ordo exstinctus est.'

<sup>21</sup> See, on Gregory and his family, PLRE III, Gregorius 5; also Markus (1997) 8–10.

<sup>22</sup> Greg. I, *Ep.*, App. 8; see Humphries (2007) 21 and 56–7 for this meeting.

<sup>23</sup> Bauer (1996) 62; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004) 160.





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# Index Locorum

(See the List of Abbreviations and Editions used for full references)

## *Inscriptions*

(See main text for full bibliography)

### *AE*

1895, 119 = *LSA* 1674: 167  
1941, 66 = 1948, 127 = *EDR* 073709: 185  
1953, 238 = *EDR* 073947: 178–9  
1964, 223 = *LSA* 2579: 159  
1964, 223 = *LSA* 2579: 167  
2003, 210 = *EDR* 029192: 112–13  
2006, 187 = *EDR* 033301, 187: 268  
2013, 142 = *EDR* 142033: 184–5

### *CCCA III*

350: 180  
351: 180  
352: 180  
353: 180  
354: 180

### *CIL VI*

45 = *EDR* 142032: 184–5  
89 = *EDR* 161224: 105  
102 = *LSA* 1503: 104  
124 = *LSA* 1505: 187  
128 = *LSA* 1502: 187  
315 = *EDR* 122444: 169–70  
508 = *EDR* 151230: 179  
526 = *LSA* 791: 76–7, 120  
751b = *EDR* 073473: 173–4  
754 = *EDR* 167157: 174, 190  
937 = *EDR* 105657: 70–1, 104–5  
940 = *EDR* 103953: 85–6  
1120b = 1656c = *LSA* 1088: 37  
1125 = *LSA* 820: 100–1  
1130 = 31242 = *EDR* 110850: 67–8  
1139 = *LSA* 2669: 70–1  
1156a = *LSA* 1276: 41–2, 53–4  
1156b = 1658c = *LSA* 1277: 110  
1158 = *LSA* 838: 102–3  
1161 = *LSA* 1278: 102, 130  
1162 = *LSA* 1279: 102, 130  
1166a = *LSA* 1281: 102–3  
1166c = 1656b = *LSA* 1283: 37  
1167 = *LSA* 1284: 102–3  
1168 = *LSA* 1099: 113, 130

1170 = *LSA* 1285: 130–1  
1171 = *LSA* 1286: 130  
1172 = *LSA* 1287: 130  
1173a = *LSA* 1288: 130  
1177 = *EDR* 114523: 6, 129  
1179 = *EDR* 111500: 41–2, 70  
1180 = *LSA* 1291: 41–2, 115n.118  
1181 = *LSA* 1292: 41–2, 115n.118  
1184a = *LSA* 1294: 67n.29, 103  
1188 = *LSA* 1306: 8–9, 85  
1189 = *LSA* 1307: 8–9, 85  
1190 = *LSA* 1308: 8–9, 85  
1193 = *LSA* 1310: 117–18  
1196 = *LSA* 1311: 70–1  
1197 = *EDR* 112717: 266–7  
1198 = *LSA* 1312: 266–7  
1397 = *LSA* 1321: 190  
1398 = *LSA* 1322: 190  
1532 = *EDR* 111336: 248–50  
1656a = *LSA* 1338: 37  
1657: 37  
1662 = *LSA* 1349: 266–7  
1665 = *EDR* 111456: 186–7  
1666 = *EDR* 111458: 186–7  
1670 = *LSA* 1352: 72–3  
1673 = *LSA* 1390: 89, 241  
1675 = *LSA* 1392: 221  
1676 = *EDR* 111460: 73, 189  
1677 = *EDR* 129296: 67n.29  
1678 = *LSA* 1393: 49–50, 73–4  
1682 = *LSA* 1394: 132, 220  
1684 = *EDR* 111462: 221–2  
1685 = *EDR* 111463: 221–2  
1686 = *EDR* 111464: 221–2  
1687 = *EDR* 104113: 221–2  
1688 = *EDR* 111466: 221–2  
1689 = *EDR* 106434: 221–2  
1690 = *LSA* 1396: 47, 221  
1691 = *LSA* 1397: 221  
1692 = *LSA* 1398: 47, 221  
1693 = *LSA* 1399: 47, 221  
1694 = *LSA* 1400: 221

- 1696 = *LSA* 1401: 37n.70  
 1697 = *LSA* 1402: 37n.70  
 1698 = *LSA* 342: 144  
 1699 = *LSA* 270: 243–4  
 1704 = *LSA* 1266: 139–41  
 1711 = *EDR* 111468: 32–3  
 1714 = *LSA* 1270: 37n.70  
 1716a = *LSA* 1419: 69  
 1716b = *LSA* 1420: 69  
 1716c = *LSA* 1421: 69  
 1718 = *EDR* 111471: 74, 112–13, 117–18  
 1719 = *LSA* 1423: 117–18  
 1728a = *EDR* 123609: 42  
 1728b = *EDR* 123611: 42  
 1730 = *LSA* 1436: 115  
 1731 = 1195 = *LSA* 1437: 45–6  
 1736 = *LSA* 1439: 55–6  
 1737 = *EDR* 111532: 212–13  
 1739 = *LSA* 1441: 47  
 1740 = *LSA* 1442: 47  
 1741 = *LSA* 1443: 47  
 1742 = *LSA* 1444: 47  
 1744g = *LSA* 1454: 115, 237  
 1745 = *LSA* 1435: 237  
 1746 = *LSA* 1456: 237  
 1750 = *EDR* 111536: 78–9  
 1751 = *LSA* 272: 222  
 1752 = *LSA* 1459: 158–9  
 1753 = *LSA* 1460: 158–9, 222  
 1754 = *LSA* 1461: 158–9  
 1755 = *LSA* 1462: 158–9  
 1756 = *LSA* 1463: 158–9  
 1756b: 158  
 1759 = *LSA* 1464: 48  
 1762 = 41, 399 = *EDR* 093621: 186–7  
 1765 = *EDR* 111539: 70, 72–3  
 1766 = 41328 = *EDR* 093563: 42–3  
 1767 = *LSA* 1466: 49–50, 73–4  
 1768 = *LSA* 1467: 52  
 1769 = *LSA* 1468: 52  
 1770 = *EDR* 111542: 37  
 1771 = *EDR* 111544: 52–3  
 1775 = 41422 = *LSA* 1471: 42  
 1777 = *LSA* 1472: 149–50  
 1778 = *LSA* 1473: 149–50  
 1779 = *EDR* 121930: 149–50  
 1779a = 31929 = *LSA* 1409: 45–6, 149  
 1782 = *LSA* 271: 243–4  
 1783 = *LSA* 1247: 159  
 1785 = *EDR* 111565: 49–50  
 3728 = *EDR* 157670: 52–3  
 3790 = 31399 = *LSA* 1489: 37  
 3791a = 31413 = *LSA* 1356: 114n.112  
 3791b = 31414 = *LSA* 1357: 114n.112  
 3864b = 31884 = *LSA* 1359: 115–16  
 3865 = *EDR* 112709: 70  
 3868 = 41381 = *LSA* 1490: 45–6  
 7106 = *EDR* 130226: 75  
 9464: 54  
 9631 = *EDR* 167178: 52–3  
 10098 = *EDR* 109247: 180  
 10099 = 41330 = *EDR* 093565: 42–3  
 10153 = *LSA* 1516: 241  
 10154 = *LSA* 1491: 241  
 30780: 178–9  
 30966 = *EDR* 107605: 178–9  
 30973b = *EDR* 121795: 183  
 31395 = *LSA* 1360: 102  
 31395 = *LSA* 1360: 130  
 31402 = *EDR* 130288: 66–7, 73, 128–9  
 31403 = *EDR* 138280: 66–7, 128–9  
 31404 = *EDR* 138281: 66–7, 128–9  
 31513 = 40771 = *LSA* 1500: 101–2  
 31564 = *EDR* 121962: 78–9  
 31888 = *LSA* 1534: 266–7  
 31893 = 41329 = *EDR* 093564: 37  
 31893 = 41329 = *EDR* 093564: 42–3  
 31912 = *EDR* 123606: 42  
 31934 = 37113: 154  
 31958 = *EDR* 114205: 41  
 31959 = 37114 = *EDR* 071667: 37–8  
 31987 = *LSA* 1363: 45n.123  
 32000 = *EDR* 114724: 154  
 32002 = 37115 = *LSA* 1537: 37  
 32014 = *EDR* 114736: 151–2  
 32031 = *EDR* 114742: 154  
 32085–7: 68  
 32088: 68  
 33856a–b = *LSA* 1388: 100  
 33865 = *EDR* 163937: 227–8  
 36951 = *LSA* 1366: 101–2  
 36956b = *LSA* 1373: 116, 118–19  
 36959 = *LSA* 1374: 114  
 36960 = *LSA* 2667: 114  
 36962 = *LSA* 1542: 116–17  
 37109 = *LSA* 1375: 116, 118–19  
 37110 = *LSA* 1376: 116, 118–19  
 37119 = 31389a = *LSA* 1577: 73–4  
 37119 = 41389a = *LSA* 1577: 49–50  
 37124 = *LSA* 1378: 115  
 37132 = *EDR* 071884: 103  
 37134 = *EDR* 071780: 116  
 40716 = *LSA* 2685: 167  
 40776 = *LSA* 2685: 221  
 40783b = 41335a = *LSA* 1562: 37  
 40803 = *EDR* 093152: 38n.73  
 40805 = *EDR* 093154: 74  
 40807 = *EDR* 073917: 122

- 41331a = *EDR* 093568: 190–1  
 41332 = *LSA* 1252: 37  
 41332 = *LSA* 1252: 128  
 41336a = *EDR* 093570: 190–1  
 41341a = *EDR* 109751: 148  
 41342 = *EDR* 093574: 153  
 41348 = *LSA* 1582: 45n.122  
 41357 = *EDR* 093589: 149n.149  
 41376 = *EDR* 093609: 117–18  
 41377 = *EDR* 073935: 155  
 41378 = *EDR* 073920: 74, 112–13, 117–18  
 41379 = *EDR* 093610: 185  
 41386 = *EDR* 073918: 117–18  
 41387 = *EDR* 073919: 117–18  
 41389 = *LSA* 1434: 116, 118–19  
 41391b = *LSA* 1523: 37  
 41393 = *EDR* 093616: 191  
 41397a = *EDR* 093619: 190–1  
 41398 = *LSA* 1525: 116, 118–19  
 41400 = *EDR* 093622: 190–1  
 41402 = *EDR* 093625: 195  
 41403 = *LSA* 1527: 120  
 41404 = *LSA* 1476: 120  
 41405 = *EDR* 093628: 120
- CIL* VIII  
 17896: 216
- CIL* IX  
 4051: 79–80
- CIL* X  
 407: 52
- CIL* XIV  
 138 = *LSA* 1650: 48  
 139 = *LSA* 1651: 48  
 173 = *LSA* 1653: 48  
 2165 = *LSA* 324: 201  
 4716 = *LSA* 1662: 48  
 4717 = *LSA* 2582: 48  
 4719 = *EDR* 106933: 118n.138
- CIL* XV  
 1714: 243–4  
 7115a–b = *EDR* 145152–3: 75  
 De Rossi, *ICUR* II  
 151 n. 25: 191  
 438 n. 127: 191–2
- Epigrammata Damasiana*  
 3: 156  
 4: 185–6
- ICUR* n.s.  
 II, 4096: 185–6  
 V, 13155: 153  
 V, 13659a: 154–5
- VI, 15764: 194  
 VI, 15842: 69–70
- IG* XIV  
 1026 = *IGUR* 191: 183–4
- IGUR*  
 69: 189–90  
 127: 178–9
- ILCV*  
 975a: 69–70  
 1637: 71  
 1761: 67n.29  
 1761a: 66  
 1857: 186–7
- ILS*  
 5910: 54
- Statues*
- LSA*  
 1068: 141–3  
 1069: 141–3  
 2538: 238–9  
 2674: 154n.182
- Texts*
- Acta Sanctorum*  
*S. Alexii*  
 1: 229  
*S. Aureae*  
 1: 41–2  
*S. Caeciliae*  
 31: 257–8  
*S. Cyriacae*  
 2: 230  
*S. Laurentii*  
 1: 229  
 4: 230  
*S. Sebastiani*  
 1: 229  
 65: 42–3  
*S. Susannae*  
 4: 257–8  
*SS. Iohannis et Pauli*  
 3: 257–8  
*SS. Simplicii, Faustini et Beatricis*  
 2: 252–3
- Amb.*  
*De offic.*  
 2.21: 138n.99  
 2.28.136: 192  
 2.64: 58  
 3.45–51: 44–5  
 3.45–51: 46–7
- Ep.*  
 72.9: 165–6

Ambrosiaster, *Quaest.*

- 114.4.8: 179–80
- 114.6.18: 179–80
- 114.7.4–10: 179–80
- 46.6: 192

## Amm. Marc.

- 14.1.6–7: 257–8
- 14.6.1: 80–1
- 14.6.9: 145
- 14.6.12–13: 216
- 14.6.13: 215–16
- 14.6.14: 217–18
- 14.6.15: 218
- 14.6.16: 146
- 14.6.17: 146
- 15.7.3–5: 131
- 15.7.4: 33
- 16.6.2: 39–40
- 16.10.5: 126–7
- 16.10.13: 95–6, 102
- 16.10.14: 36–7
- 16.10.20: 128
- 19.10.1–3: 204n.19
- 19.10.4: 170
- 21.10.7: 113
- 21.12.24: 32
- 23.3.7: 180–1
- 26.3.1–5: 32–3
- 26.3.2: 33
- 26.3.6: 51–2
- 27.3.1–2: 48–9
- 27.3.2: 80–1
- 27.3.3: 66–7, 128–9
- 27.3.3–4: 78, 204
- 27.3.4: 78
- 27.3.7: 75, 130–1
- 27.3.8: 43, 203–4, 215–16
- 27.3.10: 82–3
- 27.3.11–12: 171
- 27.7.3: 80–1
- 27.9.10: 32–3, 41, 183–4
- 27.11.2: 222
- 27.11.3: 222
- 28.1.1–57: 256
- 28.1.5–41: 32
- 28.1.17–18: 55–6
- 28.1.20: 257–8
- 28.1.23: 113
- 28.1.48–9: 256–7
- 28.1.54: 257–8
- 28.4.4: 32–3
- 28.4.12: 214
- 28.4.12: 254

28.4.17 217–18

28.4.29: 41–2

29.6.19: 184–5

30.8.8: 4–5

*Anon. Val.*

12.66: 121

65–6: 127

## Aug.

*Civ. Dei*

1.2: 150

2.4: 179–80

*Conf.*

8.2: 147

5.10: 256

*De mor. Manich.*

20.74: 256

Aur. Vict., *Caes.*

35.7: 45–6

40.5: 31

40.26: 70–1

40.28: 167

Boeth., *Cons.*

2.3.28–30: 122

2.3.28–34: 134

*Carmen contra paganos*

32: 149

98–109: 179–80

112–14: 188

38–41: 82

*Carmen contra senatorem*

9–14: 179–80

Cass., *Var.*

1.21: 81–2

2.34: 81–2

2.7: 86–7

3.29: 56–7

3.31: 236–7

3.45: 231

4.51: 62

4.51: 78–9, 268–9

4.51.3: 62

4.51.12: 62

5.42: 138–9

5.51.1–2: 205

6.4.6: 132

7.6.1: 77

7.15: 89

7.17: 83–4

9.7: 71

- 9.7.2: 123  
 11.39: 9–10  
*Chronographus a. 354*: 36–7, 45–6,  
 96–7  
 Cicero  
*Cael.*  
 7.18: 202  
*Off.*  
 1.138: 205  
 2.64: 224–5  
 Claudian  
*De bello Gild.*  
 41–3: 189  
*De cos Stil.*  
 1.325–7: 113  
*De IV cos. Hon.*  
 203–11: 106  
*De VI cos. Hon.*  
 5–10: 133–4  
 53: 28–9  
 73–6: 111  
 587–604: 111  
*Pan. Fl. Theod.*  
 282–332: 135–6  
*Pan. Prob. et Olyb.*  
 45–7: 222–3  
 226–33: 134  
 231–3: 109–10  
*Cod. Iust.*  
 1.40.15: 253  
 12.1.15: 13–14  
 12.2.1: 13–14  
*Cod. Theod.*  
 1.5.5: 59  
 1.5.6: 59  
 1.5.7: 59  
 1.6.4: 59  
 1.6.5: 46–7  
 1.6.7: 46–7, 131  
 1.16.6–7: 253  
 1.16.6: 132  
 1.16.9: 253  
 2.1.8.3: 34  
 5.14.35: 79–80  
 6.4.21.6–7: 138  
 6.4.3: 111  
 6.4.4: 111  
 6.4.7: 111  
 6.26.7: 34  
 7.15.1: 246–8  
 7.8.5: 128  
 9.1.13: 112–13  
 9.15.5.1: 150  
 9.16.1–2: 256  
 9.17.2: 79–80, 83–4  
 9.17.3: 235  
 9.40.3: 57n.202  
 9.40.5: 57n.202  
 9.40.7: 57n.202  
 11.14.1: 46–8, 55, 57  
 12.6.16: 55  
 13.4.1: 89  
 13.5.1: 51  
 13.5.29: 51  
 13.5.30: 51  
 14.3.2: 48  
 14.3.4: 48–9  
 14.3.7: 48  
 14.3.22: 48, 57  
 14.4.3: 51–2  
 14.4.4: 9–10, 52–3  
 14.4.9: 48, 55–7  
 14.4.10: 9–10, 48, 58  
 14.6.3: 80, 83–4  
 14.6.24: 55  
 14.10.1: 216  
 14.15.4: 56–7, 236  
 14.17.13: 205  
 14.17.2: 45–6, 57–8  
 14.17.3: 45–6, 57, 59–60  
 14.17.4: 59–60  
 14.17.5: 57–8  
 14.17.6: 57–9  
 14.23.1: 48, 55–7  
 14.24.1: 57  
 15.1.2: 76–7  
 15.1.5: 90–1  
 15.1.11: 107  
 15.1.12: 56  
 15.1.14: 86–7  
 15.1.19: 66, 86–7, 107  
 15.1.23: 90  
 15.1.24: 78–9  
 15.1.27: 66, 81–2, 107  
 15.1.30: 81–2  
 15.1.31: 75  
 15.1.33: 79–80  
 15.2.3: 236  
 15.2.5: 236  
 15.2.9: 236  
 15.4.1: 130  
 16.1.1: 183–4

- 16.1.2: 171–2  
 16.2.5: 170  
 16.5.3: 176  
 16.10.3: 107, 125
- Coll. Avell.*  
 1.6: 171  
 3: 66, 89, 186–7  
 3.2: 70  
 4: 171–2  
 5: 171  
 6: 171  
 7: 171  
 8: 171  
 10: 171n.65  
 11: 171–2  
 12: 171–2  
 13: 171–2  
 14.3: 43  
 16: 53–4  
 21: 119  
 21.3: 43  
 22: 119  
 29.3: 119  
 29.4–5: 36–7  
 29.5: 43  
 31.6: 43  
 32.4: 43
- De reb. bell.*  
 4.4: 82
- Fasti Filocali (InscrIt 13.2)*  
 p. 243: 180  
 p. 245: 180  
 p. 251: 106–7
- Fasti Polemii Silvii (InscrIt 13.2)*  
 p. 264: 106–7
- Frontinus, *Aq.*  
 76.2: 236  
 105–7: 236
- Fronto, *Ep. Var.*  
 5.1–2: 202–3
- Gelas., *Adv. Androm.*  
 9: 162  
 11: 163–4  
 16: 162  
 18: 163–4, 177
- Gesta senatus*  
 1: 201  
 5: 132  
 8: 201
- Greg. I  
*Ep.*  
 4.19: 191–2  
 9.8: 189–90
- App. 8: 269  
*In Ezech.*  
 2.6.22: 269
- Innocent, *Ep. Dec. Gub. (Ep. 25)*  
 2: 192  
 3: 185–6
- Jerome  
*C. Vig.*  
 3: 225–6
- Ep.*  
 22.16: 146, 187, 226  
 22.28: 225–6  
 23.3: 107–8, 149  
 24.4: 181  
 45.3–4: 225–6  
 46.12: 217  
 50.1: 225–6  
 54.13: 146  
 54.15: 261  
 58.7: 188  
 66.11: 188  
 66.5: 228–9  
 66.6: 146  
 77: 146  
 77.4: 146  
 77.5: 146–7  
 77.10: 188–90  
 77.11: 147–8, 188  
 127.2: 238–9  
 127.4: 181  
 127.8: 176  
 128.4: 181  
 128.5: 207, 263–4  
 130.14: 188  
 133.13: 225–6
- In Ezech.*  
 18.5: 192
- I, *praef.*: 1  
*In Jerem.*  
 11.15: 192
- Leo, *Serm.*  
 22: 124–5  
 23: 124–5  
 23.2: 29–30  
 25.2: 29–30  
 71: 124–5

*Lib. pont.*

- I, 200: 193–4
- I, 220–2: 261
- I, 220: 188
- I, 221–2: 193–4
- I, 222: 57
- I, 232–3: 261
- I, 232: 156
- I, 232: 161
- I, 233: 193–4, 238–9
- I, 292–3: 255
- II, 3: 217–18
- II, 8: 217–18
- II, 25: 189–90

*Lib. precum*

- 78–83: 171–2
- 79–80: 176
- 79–80: 257–8
- 84: 171–2

*Lucan, BC*

- 10.110–25: 214n.70

*Lydus, De mag.*

- 3.19: 34–5

*Macrobian, Sat.*

- 1.1.4: 255
- 1.2.1: 255
- 1.2.6: 255
- 1.2.6–7: 218
- 1.7.1: 218
- 1.7.1–3: 218
- 1.7.4–6: 255
- 1.8.1–3: 104–5

*Maj., Nov.*

- 4: 86–7
- 4.1: 56–7
- 4.1: 62–3

*Malalas*

- 12.30: 65

*Malchus*

- Frag. 14: 121

*Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum collatio*

- 5.3: 111–12

*Not. dig. occ.*

- 4: 39–40, 46–7, 183–4
- 4.15: 55

*Olymp.*

- Frag. 7.5: 177–8
- Frag. 7.7: 177–8
- Frag. 41.1: 207–8, 221–2, 233
- Frag. 41.2: 138

*Orientius, Commonitorium*

- 173–4: 223

*Palladius, Historia Lausiaca*

- 61.7: 224–5

*Pan. Lat.*

- 2(12).1.3–4: 111
- 2(12).47.3–4: 111
- 2(12).47.3: 227–8
- 4(10).15.4–7: 106
- 4(10).31.1: 127
- 11(3).19.4–5: 95
- 12(9).19: 126–7
- 12(9).9.1: 127

*Paul. Mil., V. Amb.*

- 10: 225–6

*Paul. Nola, Ep.*

- 13.11: 150
- 32.17: 72

*Pliny, Ep.*

- 7.24.8–9: 205n.24

*Pliny, HN*

- 36.109–12: 206
- 36.111: 207–8

*Plut.*

*Caesar*

- 68.1: 204–5

*Crassus*

- 2.4: 89–90

*Priscus*

- Frag. 30.1: 29

*Proc., Wars*

- 3.5.1–4: 120
- 4.9.5: 120
- 7.22.9–16: 73–4

*Prud.*

*C. Symm.*

- 1.205–11: 173
- 1.349–53: 108
- 1.544–77: 111
- 1.578–86: 59–60

*Prud., Perist.*

- 2.45–6: 82
- 2.517–20: 181
- 10.148: 178–9
- 10.151–60: 180–1
- 10.1061–75: 179–80
- 12.47–9: 66

Ps-Aethicus, *Cosmog.* (ed. Riese)

p. 83: 49–50, 177

Rut. Nam., *De red. suo*

1.13–16: 118

1.111–12: 207–8

1.423–6: 244–5

Sallust, *Cat.*

12.3–4: 206

Seneca the Elder, *Controv.*

2.1.1: 215

2.1.13: 207–8

Seneca

*Ben.*

4.6.2: 214

6.33.3–34.2: 245–6

*Dial.*

6.10.1: 201

SHA

*Alex. Sev.*

4.3: 227–8

6.2: 17–18

25.3–8: 17

26.7: 49–50

33.1: 39–40

39.3–4: 54

43.1: 132n.54

43.3–4: 136

*Ant. Pius*

6.12: 226–7

11.7: 227–8

*Aur.*

1.1–2: 176–7

1.2–3: 176–7

18.4: 4–5

21.5–6: 4–5

35.2: 17

35.3: 167

48.1: 17, 45–6

49.1: 28–9, 255–6

Claud.

3.3: 97

*Gall.*

18.5: 49–50

*Gord.*

2.3: 205

12.1–4: 112–13

32.1: 205

32.6–7: 49–50

*Hadr.*

11.4: 257–8

18.2: 235

19.9–13: 17

9.7: 227–8

*Heliogab.*

15.5–7: 108

4.1–2: 187

4.3–4: 187

*Max et Balb.*

1.1: 17–18

1.4: 70

16.1: 205

*Max.*

16.1: 17–18, 106–7

*Pesc. Nig.*

12.4: 205

*Prob.*

11.5: 17–18

*Sev.*

18.3: 17

19.5: 17

23.1: 17

*Tir. Tryg.*

25.4: 205

*Val.*

5.4: 17–18, 106–7

*Sid. Apoll.*

*Carm.*

2.18–22: 134n.65

2.544–8: 134

*Ep.*

1.7: 120–1

1.7.4: 120–1

1.7.9: 120–1

1.9.1: 223

1.9.3–4: 223

1.9.5: 223

1.9.6: 223–4

1.10: 44

1.11: 119–20

1.11.3: 119–20

*Siricius, Ep.*

1.3: 185–6

10.10: 185–6

*Socrat., HE*

5.18: 57n.202

7.11: 256



Soz. HE

9.6.3–5: 177–8

Suet.

*Augustus*

30.1: 40

57.1: 42

*Tiberius*

63: 256

*Vespasian*

21: 226–7

Symm.

*Ep.*

1.12: 207, 245

1.13: 114–15

1.44: 204

1.52: 11–12

1.58: 222

1.60: 222–3

1.64: 219–20

1.68: 219–20

2.14: 219–20

2.46: 136–7

2.52: 258

2.55: 55–6

2.57: 111

2.77: 136–7

2.78: 136–7

2.81: 136n.86

3.12: 243–4

3.14: 224–5

3.53: 251–2

3.88: 243–4

4.8: 136–7

4.8.2: 137

4.12: 136–7

4.12.2: 138–9

4.18: 111

4.38: 246–8

4.60.3: 136–7

4.63: 138

4.70: 89

5.11: 135–6, 224–5

5.15: 135–6

5.22: 136

5.46: 136–7

5.76: 89

6.8: 112n. 97

6.12: 44

6.33: 136–7

6.40: 134–5

6.47: 258

6.49: 245

6.49.1: 206–7

6.70: 206–7, 245

6.72: 258

7.18: 243–4

7.19: 203, 243–4

7.21: 111, 251–2

7.38: 111

7.45: 246–8

7.59: 136–7

7.102: 225

7.110: 136–7

7.122: 136–7

8.41: 44

8.42: 245

8.42.2: 206–7

9.117: 136

9.126: 111, 138

9.137: 136–7

9.141: 136–7

9.144: 136–7

9.150: 80–1

9.153: 135

*Or.*

1.14: 128–9

2.10: 128–9

*Relat.*

3.3–4: 166n.23

3.5: 111, 165–6

3.7: 77, 127, 167–8

4: 132

4.2: 132

8: 138n.99

8.2: 138

10.2: 149

12: 149

14.3: 90–1

20: 132

21: 183–4

22: 53–4

23.3: 48

23.4–5: 37–8

23.8–10: 256–7

23.9: 34–5

24: 111–12

24.3: 149

25: 89

25.2: 90

26: 89

30.3: 153

34: 80–1

Tacitus, *Ann.*

3.55.3: 206

14.56.3: 215

Them., *Or.*

3.40: 113

*V. Mel. Gr.*

6: 181–2

11: 226–7

11–13: 226–7

14: 250, 259, 261

19: 44

*V. Mel. Lat.*

5.1–3: 181–2

7.1: 228–9

11–13: 226–7

11.2: 226–7

14: 259, 261

14.2: 250

34.1–3: 44

*V. S. Fulgentii*

13.27: 121

Val. III, *Nov.*

5.1: 73

5.3: 90–1

36: 9–10

Vitruvius, *De arch.*

6.5.1–2: 232

6.5.2: 206, 252–3

Zos.

2.10.1: 31

2.9.3: 31, 53–4

4.45.4: 6

5.11.1: 113

5.29.6: 29

5.39.4: 44–5

5.41.1–3: 177–8

# Index

*Note:* Figures are indicated by italic 'f' and notes are indicated by italic 'n', respectively following the page number.

- acclamations 132
- acts of martyrs 229–30, 257–8
- administration (of Rome) 5–6, 27–8, 30–2, 40–3, 46, 60–1, 81, 83–4
- aerarium Saturni* 104–5
- altar of Victory (Curia) 109, 111, 165–6
- Ambrose (bishop) 109, 225–6
- Ammianus Marcellinus 126–7, 130–1, 145–6, 215–18, 222, 254, 256–7
- Anastasia (Christian aristocrat) 190–1
- Andromachus (Roman aristocrat) 162
- Anicii 158–9, 189–90
- annona* 4–5, 7, 17, 27, 44–51, 53–60, 189, 265
  - bread 57–60
  - pork 51–2
  - praefectus* 32, 46–7, 55, 57–9, 127–8, 131
- antiquarianism 104–5
- Apronianus, L. Turcius 32–3, 51–2
- aqueducts 77, 79–80, 236–7
- arca vinaria* 80–1, 83–4
- Arch of Constantine 64–5, 64f, 126–7
- architects 89
- Arian community 191–2
- Arigerus (Ostrogothic official) 231–2
- Arvandus (Gallic senator) 120–1
- Atrium Libertatis 76–7, 97–100, 117–19, 122
- Atrium Minervae 111–12, 120
- Attalus, Priscus 31–2
- Aurelian 4–5, 65, 167
- Aurelianic Wall 4–5, 8–9, 49–50, 65, 85–6, 88–9
- banquet 114, 218–19
- Baptism 146–7, 185–6
- Basilicas
  - Aemilia 98f, 101–2, 116–17
  - Hilariana 180, 183
  - Iulia 98f, 101–2
  - of Maxentius 37
- Basilicas, Christian
  - Apostolorum* (S. Sebastiano) 151, 152f, 153–5
  - Lateran (S. John) 146
  - S. Maria Maggiore 193–4, 238–9
  - S. Paul 66, 89, 154
  - S. Peter (Vatican) 150, 155–6, 157f, 158–60, 190–1
  - S. Stefano on via Latina 151–2, 194
  - SS. Giovanni e Paolo 181–2, 194
- Bassus
  - Flavius Anicius Auchenius 161
  - Iunius (consul 331) 134–5, 212–13
  - Iunius (prefect 359) 148–9
- Baths 130–1
  - of Caracalla 130–1
  - of Trajan 239, 241
- Belisarius 255
- Bishops 29–30, 175–6, 181–2, 191
- Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus (Roman aristocrat) 122, 134–5
- Bricks 84–5
- Bridge of Valentinian 66–7, 73, 128–9
- Brown, Peter 162–3
- Building industry 65, 89–90
- building materials 80, 82–4, 235
  - reuse 8–9, 85–7
- Building works 76–7, 91
- Caelian Hill 233–5, 234f, 241–4, 242f, 246
- Calendar of 354 124–5
- Calendar of Polemius Silvius 124–5
- Calendar, Roman 124
- Cameron, Alan 12–13, 137–8, 148–9, 164, 167
- Campanianus, Iulius Felix 72–3
- Campus Martius 49–51, 50f, 189–90
- Capitol 107–8, 120–1
- Carmen contra paganos 149, 188
- Cassiodorus 14–15, 77
- Castor and Pollux (*see also* Temple of Castor and Pollux)
  - cult 177
- Celsus, Ragonius Vincentius 48
- Cerealis, Naeratius 238–9
- Chastagnol, André 27, 34–5, 65
- Christianity 2, 7–8, 10, 21, 109–10
- Christianization 124–5, 162–5, 167–8, 177–8, 196, 250, 261

- Church 8–9, 29–30, 41, 69–70, 119, 124–5,  
150–1, 161, 164–5, 231, 261, 268
- churches (*see also* titulus)  
architecture 209  
S. Agata dei Goti 191–2  
S. Anastasia 185  
S. Andrea in Catabarbara (*see also* *domus* of  
Iunius Bassus) 195  
SS. Quattro Coronati 233–5, 234f  
S. Ursus 35
- civil conflict 116, 120
- clerics 175–6, 225–6
- clients 215–16, 218–23, 229
- clothing 141–3, 145, 216
- Coarelli, Filippo 37–8
- Coates–Stephens, Robert 85
- collegia*, *see corpus*
- Colosseum 68–9, 87, 137–9, 268
- Column of Phocas 98f
- Comitium 98f, 114
- compitum* 40–3
- Constantine 5–8, 11, 64–5, 108, 126–7,  
167, 170
- Constantinople 7, 11, 27, 29
- Constantius II 167–8  
*adventus* 102–3, 113, 126–8, 130  
equestrian statue 102–3
- consulship 133–6
- corpus* (guild) 47–9, 51–2, 65, 88–91
- corruption 81
- curator aedium sacrarum* 183–4
- curator regionum* 40, 43
- Curia (Senate house) 76–7, 97, 98f, 101–2,  
111–14, 117–22, 134, 201–2, 269
- Damasus (bishop) 168–9, 171–2, 185–6, 190–2
- Dea Dia 168–9
- Demetrias (Christian aristocrat) 194
- diptych of Rufius Probianus 38–9
- domus*  
abandonment 259–61, 268–9  
architecture 208–9, 212–13, 216–18, 233–5,  
239–41, 243–6, 250–1, 254–6  
as personal symbol 202–3, 205–7, 213–14,  
216, 218–19, 228–9, 243–4, 252–4, 256–7,  
266–7  
as refuge 256–8  
as social centre 215–16, 219–24, 228–30, 232,  
251–4  
atrium 248–50  
confiscation 256, 258  
destruction of 203–5  
donated to church 261–2, 268–9  
function 231–2, 255, 258  
imperial intervention 257–8  
imperial visitors 226–8  
importance of decoration 206–10, 213–14,  
216, 254  
in urban space 233–7, 250, 253, 256–8, 262,  
266–7  
of Fabius Cilo (S. Balbina) 209, 210f  
of Gaudentius 246–8, 247f, 250, 259  
of Iunius Bassus (*see* S. Andrea in  
Catabarbara) 209–14, 211f, 212f, 213f  
of Naeratus Cerealis (*see* *domus* of  
Palmatius) 237–9, 238f  
of Palmatus (*see* *domus* of Naeratus  
Cerealis) 261  
of Piazza dei Cinquecento 259–61, 260f  
of Pompey (*domus rostrata*) 205  
of Probus (*see also* *domus Pinciana*) 222  
of the Gordiani 205  
of the Symmachi 243–5, 243f, 250–1, 259  
of the Valerii 221, 248–50, 249f, 259  
off via Giovanni Lanza 173  
on the Sette Sale 239–41, 240f, 250–1  
on Vicus Caprarius 235  
Parthorum 259  
Pinciana (*see also* *domus* of Probus) 255  
political function 201–2, 206–7, 215, 219–25,  
228–30, 232, 251–7  
reception halls 209–14, 233–5, 239–41, 245,  
250, 254  
religious use 172–3, 175–6, 202, 225–6, 256,  
266–7  
under SS. Giovanni e Paolo 181–2  
visitors 214–16, 223–9, 243–6, 251–2  
water supply 236
- emperors and Rome 4–6, 8–9, 17, 28–9, 32,  
63–4, 67, 75, 78–80, 110–11, 114, 126–7,  
266–7  
Rome as imperial symbol 1–2, 4–6, 8
- encroachment 233–5
- Esquiline 237
- Eventius (aristocrat) 155
- evidence (state of) 3, 14–16
- Fabiola (Christian aristocrat) 146–8, 188–90
- fall of Rome 1
- Famine 46–7, 55–6
- Faustus, Anicius Acilius Glabrio 49–50, 73–4,  
76–7, 189, 201, 252–3
- Festivals 124–5, 133, 135–8, 160–1, 163–4, 266  
imperial 126, 128–9, 132
- Financial management (of Rome) 79–84
- Fire of 283 96–7
- Flavianus, Nicomachus 206–7, 225

- Foreigners 32–3  
 Forum (*see also* Roman Forum)  
     Aproniani 51–4  
     Boarium 34–5, 169–70  
     of Augustus 87  
     of Caesar 97–100, 99f  
     of Epityncanus 266–7  
     of Petronius Maximus 266–7  
     of Sibidius 49–51, 73–4, 266–7  
     of Trajan 134, 143  
     Palatini 129  
     Suarium 52–4  
 Fratres Arvales 168–9  
 Funerals 147–51, 160–1  
 Funerary Basilica 151, 154–5  
 Funerary monuments 150–6, 159, 161  
  
 Games 136–8  
 Gaudentius (Roman aristocrat) 246–8  
 Gelasius (bishop) 162–4, 177  
 Gesta Liberii 171  
 Gibbon, Edward 1  
 Gradus (Steps) 45–6, 54, 57–60  
 Gratian 114–15  
 Gregory I (bishop) 269  
 Guidobaldi, Federico 209  
  
 Hercules  
     ara maxima 169–70  
     cult 169–70  
 Hilaria 176–7  
*Historia Augusta* 16–18, 70, 105–8, 112–13,  
     176–7, 205, 226–8  
 Honorius 133–4  
 Horrea 54–7  
 horti 141–3  
 housing market 251, 259  
 Hymetius, Iulius Festus (Roman aristocrat)  
     55–6  
  
 Imperial government 27, 29  
 imperial legislation 6, 16, 55–7, 75, 81, 86–7,  
     163–4, 170, 235–7, 253–4, 256  
 Imperial monuments 63–5, 77, 128–30  
 imperial palace 28–9, 226–7, 252–3  
 Imperial visits 102–3, 110–11, 113, 121, 126–8  
 Inscriptions 15, 67–71, 74–7, 101, 110, 114–15,  
     120, 128–31, 151–3, 158, 173–4, 179–80,  
     212–13, 220, 222, 268  
 insula at Conservatorio di San Pasquale 259  
 Isis  
     shrine 173  
 Iulianus, Alfeius Ceionius (Roman  
     aristocrat) 221  
  
 Jerome (Christian Writer) 107–8, 146–8, 176,  
     181, 188, 207, 216–17, 225–6, 228–9, 261,  
     263–4  
 Jones, A. H. M. 88  
  
 Kalends of January 134–5  
 Kelly, Christopher 254  
 King, Ostrogothic 69  
  
 Lanciani, Rodolfo 1, 237  
 Leo the Great (bishop) 124–5, 164–5  
 Leontius, Flavius (Roman aristocrat) 131  
 Libellus precum 171–6  
 Liber pontificalis 192–3, 262  
 Lime-burners 80, 83–4  
 liturgy 181  
 Lizzi Testa, Rita 107  
 Longinianus, Flavius Macrobius (Roman  
     aristocrat) 185  
 Lucceia (Christian aristocrat) 153  
 Lupercalia 162–4  
  
 Magna Mater  
     cult 176–7, 179–80  
     Taurobolium 178–80  
 Majorian 62–3  
 Marble 86  
 Marius Victorinus (rhetor) 147, 154  
 martyrs  
     cult 164–5, 181–2, 194  
 Maurianus (Roman aristocrat) 151–2  
 Maxentius 5–6, 31–2, 36–7, 100  
 Maximian 95, 100–1  
 Maximinus (prefect of the *annona*) 32  
 Melania the Younger 181–2, 224–9, 250, 261  
 Memory 21, 95–6, 105–7  
*Mensae oleariae* 57  
 Mithraeum  
     of the Olympii 173–5  
 Mithras  
     cave 173  
     cult 173–5, 179  
 Monte Citorio 51  
  
 Namatianus, Rutilius 207–8  
 Nash, Ernest 35  
*Navicularii* 51  
 neighbours 203–4, 215–16, 246–8, 251–2  
*nomenclatores* 217–18  
*Notitia dignitatum* 39–40  
  
 Olympiodorus of Thebes 137–8, 207–8,  
     221–2, 233  
 opus sectile 209–14, 239–41, 245

- Orfitus, Memmius Vitrasius (Roman aristocrat) 47, 80–1, 184–5
- Orlandi, Silvia 68, 137
- orthodoxy 163–4, 171–2, 176
- Ostia 86  
*domus* 235
- Paganism 7–8, 107, 109–10, 163–4  
 rituals 177–8  
 ‘Pagan reaction’ 12–13
- Palmatus 193–4
- Pammachius (Roman aristocrat) 146, 150,  
 181–2, 188–90, 194
- Panciera, Silvio 184–5
- Panegyric 133–5
- Patrons 47–8, 52–4, 59–60, 74, 91, 215–16,  
 218–23
- Paulinus iunior, Amnius Manius Caesonius  
 (Roman aristocrat) 220–1
- Paulinus of Nola 72  
 Basilica at Fondi 72
- Phrygianum 178–80
- Physical decay (Rome) 9
- Pietri, Charles 192–3
- Pistores* 48–9, 55–7, 59–60
- Pompeianus, Gabinius Barbarus (Roman aristocrat) 177–8
- Pompeianus, Insteius (Roman aristocrat) 154
- pontifex maior* (see also priesthoods) 165–7
- pontifex maximus* (see also priesthoods) 166–7
- poor 228–9
- population 7, 9–10
- Porticus Minucia Frumentaria 45, 73, 189
- Porticus of the *Dei Consentes* 98*f*, 104
- Praetextatus, Vettius Agorius 104, 107–8,  
 149–50, 171–2
- priesthoods 166–9, 173–5, 178–80
- private  
 concept of 202–3, 233–5, 252–4, 256–7  
 building 88  
 munificence 71, 182–3, 187, 190–2
- Probianus, Gabinius Vettius (Roman aristocrat) 110
- Probus, Sextus Petronius (Roman aristocrat) 133, 158, 222, 255–6  
 mausoleum 156–9, 157*f*, 159–60
- Processions 107–10, 122, 134, 147–8, 155,  
 159–60, 180
- Proculus, L. Aradius Valerius (Roman aristocrat) 47, 221–2, 248–50
- Proculus, Q. Aradius Rufinus (Roman aristocrat) 221–2, 248–50
- Prudentius (Christian poet) 108, 172–3, 181
- Public building 4–6, 8–9, 65–7, 69–73,  
 77–8, 82–3, 88–9, 91, 182–4, 186–7,  
 265–6, 268  
 funding 78–83
- public  
 concept of 202–3, 253–4, 256–7  
 office 133, 138–41, 145  
 opinion 119–20
- Quirinal 193–4
- Recommendation 219–20
- Regionary catalogues 40–1, 54, 233
- Regions 40–1, 43, 60, 264–5
- Ricimer (General) 191–2
- riots 44, 131, 203–4
- Rogatus, Lucius Crepereius (Roman aristocrat) 190
- Roman Forum  
 as ceremonial space 109–10, 122, 134  
 as imperial symbol 95–6, 100, 102, 110–11, 121  
 destruction 116, 118–19  
 function 101–2, 115–16, 122–3  
 Tetrarchic restoration 96–7
- Roman officials 70–1, 130
- Rostra Diocletiani* 98*f*, 103, 118–19
- Rostra* 27, 98*f*, 119–20
- sack of Rome 6–7, 9–10, 14–15, 116, 120, 259,  
 263–4
- Sacrifice 170
- Sallustius (Roman aristocrat) 66
- salutatio* 216–19
- Samaritans 231
- Saturnalia (Macrobius) 218, 255
- scholarship (on Rome) 2–4, 18–19, 21
- Secretarium* 34  
 Circi 34–5  
 Neronis 35  
 Senatus 112–13, 122  
 Tellurens 37–8
- Senate 70–1
- Senate 6–7, 17–18, 111–13, 118, 121–3, 127, 134,  
 201, 236–7  
 courts 112–13, 120–1  
*iudicium quinquvirale* 112–13
- Senatorial aristocracy  
 Christianization 12–13  
 Composition 10–14  
 Roman 2–3, 6–7, 10–12, 21–2, 44–5, 47–9,  
 52–3, 59–60, 71–2, 75, 77–8, 87–90,  
 102–3, 113, 121, 123, 127, 131–4,  
 136–9, 143–5, 267–8  
 scholarship 2–3

- Senatorial order 141  
 Shrine of Iuturna 98*f*, 101–2, 106–7  
 Sidonius Apollinaris 119–20, 223–4  
 Silverius (bishop) 255  
 Sol, deus 167  
 Spoliation 9, 86–7, 150–1, 235  
 Statio Aquarum 101–2  
 Statues 47, 139, 141–4  
     of the ‘old magistrate’ 141–3, 142*f*  
     imperial 100–3, 113–14, 117–18, 130, 143  
     moved to Forum 110  
     of deities 104, 173, 187  
     of senators 115, 118–19, 127–8, 132, 139,  
         141–4, 158–9, 190, 220–2, 248–50  
 Stilicho 113, 115  
 Suarii 52–4  
*superstitio* 125  
 Symmachus  
     Lucius Aurelius Avianus (Roman  
         aristocrat) 66–7, 78, 128–9, 144–5, 204  
     Quintus Aurelius (Roman aristocrat) 34–5,  
         44–5, 80–1, 89, 109, 111, 127, 133–8,  
         165–8, 206–7, 219–20, 224–5, 243–8,  
         251–2, 258  
 Symmachus iunior  
     Quintus Aurelius Memmius (Roman  
         aristocrat) 62  
     Quintus Fabius Memmius (Roman  
         aristocrat) 136–8, 243–4  
  
*tabulae patronatus* 221–2, 248–50  
 Temples 103–4, 107–10, 125, 163–4, 183–5  
     of Apollo (Campus Martius) 184–5  
     of Caesar 98*f*  
     of Castor and Pollux (Dioscuri) 98*f*,  
         106–7, 116  
     of Concord 98*f*, 105  
     of Minerva Medica (so-called) 141–3  
     of Peace 35–7, 36*f*, 119  
     of Saturn 70–1, 98*f*, 104–5  
     of the Sun 49–50  
     of Venus and Rome 70–1  
     of Venus Genetrix 97–100, 99*f*  
     of Vespasian 98*f*  
*tesserae monumentorum* 75–6  
 Theatre of Pompey 62  
 Theoderic 62, 121–2, 127, 138–9, 231–2, 236–7,  
     267–8  
 Theodorus, Flavius Mallius 135–6, 224–5  
 Theodosian Code (*see* imperial legislation) 29,  
     107, 132, 201, 252–3  
 Titianus, Celsinus (Roman aristocrat) 219–20  
 Titianus, Fabius (Roman aristocrat) 102–3, 110  
 titulus (*see also* churches) 192–3  
     Vestinae 193–4  
  
 topography 265  
     religious 182–3  
*Tribunus fori suarii* 31–2, 53–4  
 Triclinium 114, 239–41, 246  
 Tulliana, Accia Maria (Christian aristocrat) 154  
  
 Uraniorum, mausoleum 154–5  
 urban praetors 169–70  
 Urban prefect 65–7, 80–1, 129  
     and Christian conflicts 171–2  
     and religious buildings 183–7  
     appointments 32  
     chariot 132  
     court 34, 37–8  
     office 30–1, 39–40, 46–7, 55, 131  
     powers 27, 31–3, 41–2, 44, 46–7, 60, 66–8, 70,  
         81–2, 128, 256–7  
 Urban Prefecture 27–8, 30–3, 35–6, 38–9, 57, 65,  
     264–5  
     headquarters 35–9, 60  
     location 37  
 Urban space 19–22, 74, 86, 91–2, 263–4  
     definition 20–1  
     scholarship 18–22  
 urbanism 233–5, 251–2, 258  
 Urbanus, Caius Flavius Caelius (Roman  
     aristocrat) 139–41, 140*f*  
 Ursinus (Christian cleric) 171  
 Usurpations 6–7, 102–3  
  
 Valentio, Septimius (imperial official) 100–2  
 Valila, Flavius (Roman aristocrat) 195  
 Valvomeres, Petrus 131  
*Vectigalia* 79–80  
 Vestina (Christian aristocrat) 193–4, 261  
 Via Sacra 98*f*  
     *vicarius urbis Romae* 32, 37–9, 55  
     *vicomagistri* 40–1  
     *vicus* 40–3, 57–8, 60, 203–4, 264–5  
 Villas 150–1  
 Vitruvius 206  
 Viventius, Flavius (Roman aristocrat) 153  
 Volusianus, Ceionius Rufius (Roman  
     aristocrat) 43, 75, 82–3, 130–1,  
     203–4, 215–16  
  
 Walking 145–6  
 Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew 202  
 Ward-Perkins, Bryan 71  
 widows 261  
 workers 88–90  
  
 xenodochium 188–90  
  
 Zosimus (Bishop) 43, 119